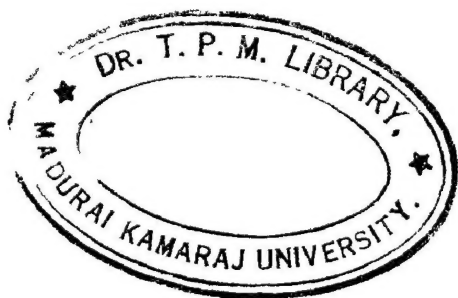


M. SALTYKOV-SHCHEDRIN

The Golovlyovs

A novel



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«ГОСПОДА ГОЛОВЛЕВЫ»

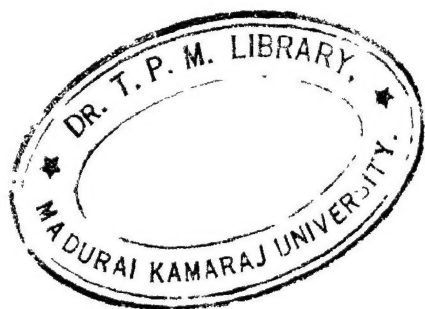
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S. MAKASHIN

A GREAT WORK OF RUSSIAN LITERATURE*

Mikhail Yevgrafovich Saltykov (1826-1889), who wrote under the pen-name of N. Shchedrin, was one of the biggest Russian writers, and in Russia's literature he holds an unchallenged place of his own. Apart from the ideological stand of a democrat and Utopian socialist which he assumed, apart from the originality and size of his talent, and apart from the fact that he was a genius for portraying the negative aspects of life, he owed this place to the specific character of the epoch in which he lived and wrote.

For Russia this was an epoch of a decline of the serfdom system and all the ideologies built up on its basis, an epoch during which this enormous, backward country was drawn into the orbit of the capitalist industrial revolution. Shchedrin embarked on his literary career at the end of the 1840's, when this revolution was in its inception, and died in 1889, shortly before its culmination, when Russia's proletariat emerged upon the historical arena. He lived and wrote in the epoch when Russia, shaped over the centuries as a feudal empire,—as "Holy Rus" to the Slavophiles—came into motion.

Russia was the last of Europe's great powers to be swept by the industrial revolution. And it was accomplished with a speed unheard of in Europe's old countries, accompanied moreover by enormous socio-economic upheavals and changes in public and personal psychology, unparalleled by anything in the dramatic enough history of 19th century Western Europe.

And it was this picture—the decline of serfdom and the birth of capitalism in Russia—that Shchedrin de-

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scribed. He described it not as an impartial chronicle, not as a learned sociologist or historian, but as an artist passionately concerned with the state of the world he lived in, anxious to influence this world and change its course according to his own ideals. We must truly say that the picture he painted was unique in Russian literature, although the phenomena explored by Shchedrin were also examined by other writers, belonging to different social camps.

While a certain fragmentariness is common to Shchedrin's work—most of his books are really collections of disconnected stories, many of which having earned independent significance,—everything that he has written combines into a great artistic canvas portraying a whole historical epoch, as does Dante's *The Divine Comedy* and Balzac's *The Human Comedy*.

"Without Shchedrin's help it is impossible to understand the history of Russia in the latter half of the 19th century," wrote Gorky. Indeed, all the main happenings in Russian life from the 1830's to the 1880's are described and "assessed" by Shchedrin. Serfdom in Russia is portrayed in the monumental fresco *The Old Times of Poshekhonye*; tsarist autocracy in relation to the downtrodden populace and society—in the brilliant *The History of a Town*, which Turgenev compared to the best of Jonathan Swift; the birth of capitalism in Russia and the emergence of the new "unwashed" masters of Russian life—in the realistic scenes of *The Asylum of Monrepos* and many other stories; and the period of reaction in the 1880's—in the superb grotesque *A Modern Idyll*. Shchedrin's *The Old Times of Poshekhonye* and his *Tales* may be called the culmination of his career, for everything he put into his other works has been condensed and "summed-up" in these wonderful satirical miniatures.

But, of course, the "informative" value of Shchedrin's work is not all there is to it. In *War and Peace* Tolstoy wrote of the "exclusively Russian fearlessness when it came to self-condemnation and self-ridicule". And these traits of the Russian character are given the boldest expression by Shchedrin. One after the other, his books—for which he paid with an eight-year exile—joined in the revolutionary struggle. With their honest and ruthless criticism they destroyed the lying myths, dispelled the illusions, prejudices and fear cultivated in the average Russian by the still powerful tsarist autocracy. They set the mind free from the inhibiting taboos of the feudal-bourgeois world; and using ridicule for a weapon, which "struck and scorched like lightning", they fought against coercion from above, against passiveness below, and the feebleness of the

liberal circles. They struck at all the other pillars of the ideologically decrepit but physically still powerful "old world".

The strength of these blows was known equally well to Shchedrin's friends and enemies. As one functionary wrote: "With the appearance of his every new book, a whole corner of the old edifice collapsed.... Nothing could survive his blow. An undertaking at which he aimed his satire immediately became ridiculous and disgraceful. It could not be taken seriously. There was nothing for it, but to pass away."

Shchedrin's work, linked with the traditions of social criticism in Russian literature (Radishchev, Griboyedov, Gogol), and also with the traditions of the great satirists of the West-European Renaissance (Rabelais, Cervantes, Swift), was a new striking development in Russian realist literature.

He focused his attention mainly on man as a social being and, with his faculty for discernment, produced portraits not just of personalities but of whole social groups and classes. His passionate indictments, expressing his true feelings, were always prompted by democratic protest. In portraying and sternly condemning the negative aspects of contemporary life, Shchedrin pursued a "hidden" ideal of his own. It is invisibly present in all his books, it is in the name of this ideal that Shchedrin criticises and condemns the phenomena inimical to it, and it is from contact with this ideal that readers carry away that aesthetical and ethical consciousness of basic beauty.

Shchedrin saw the world in sharply contrasting colours, and his artistic vision was tragic. In his approach to developments, the main criteria of their acceptability were good sense, fairness, and their furtherance of an ideally harmonious society. (Shchedrin had become converted to the ideals of Utopian socialism when, as a very young man in the 1840's, he attended the circles of progressive Russian young people—the ideological pupils of Fourier and Saint-Simon.) A world that did not measure up to these requirements was a stupid, unjust world, where insanity and foolishness held sway. The Town of Glupov (Stupid Town)—one of the central images in Shchedrin's writing—has resulted from this philosophy. It is a powerful satirical generalisation, condemning Russian tsarism and all the manifest and hidden pillars of this despotic regime, including the "inertness", and spontaneous anarchism of the masses which had for centuries been oppressed by the "unwise forces of history"

Another extremely important aspect of Shchedrin's attitude to

inimical social phenomena found expression in the image of "ghosts" or "emptiness"—one of his most profound artistic and philosophico-historical generalisations. To quote the author: "... it is a form of life that aspires after something essential, vital and vibrant, and which in actual fact contains nothing but emptiness." Each of his "ghosts" had once possessed the truth or a share of the truth, but had lost it with the passage of time and turned into a dead, empty form, oppressing living life. "The world I am exploring is in truth a world of ghosts," said Shchedrin, including in this world all the social institutions, ideals, ethic norms and socio-psychological complexes which had been evolved by mankind within the framework of regimes and systems that had already outlived or were outliving themselves.

In some cases Shchedrin used grotesque (*The History of a Town*, *A Modern Idyll* and other books) and in other chose realistic writing to portray the "world of ghosts" or the "world of emptiness".

The "world of emptiness" is most forcefully presented in *The Golovlyovs*, a family chronicle of amazing socio-psychological depth and written in the realistic manner. This book is one of the masterpieces of Russian and world fiction.

Briefly told, the story of how this book was written (1875-1880), will enable the reader to follow the workings of the author's mind.

In a letter written in 1881, Shchedrin thus explained the general idea of the books he wrote in the 1870's: "I turned to the subject of family relations, private property, and the state system, and implied that all this was already non-existent, and consequently that the principles, for the sake of which freedom was restricted, were not really principles even for those who used them." The principle of property made the basis of *Loyal Speeches*, the principle of family—*The Golovlyovs*, and the principle of statehood—*The Year Round*. It was the approach of a writer who had inherited from the classics of Utopian socialism and the Russian followers of Hegelianism a critical attitude to "institutions", as a category of disharmonious and historical, that is, transient notions which in time would become "spectoral" and "empty". In the same letter Shchedrin said: "After all, family, property and state were also ideals in their day, and yet they are obviously exhausting themselves."

At first Shchedrin wanted to "put these institutions on trial" within the space of one book—a cycle of stories under the title of *Loyal Speeches* (speeches made by conservatives in defence of

status quo). He got down to work on this book in 1872. However, the fortunes of one of the stories "The Family Court of Justice", written in Baden-Baden and Paris in 1875, altered his original intentions.

"The Family Court of Justice" was planned as a story *en thèse*. Episodes in the life of a family belonging to the landowners' class—the Golovlyovs—were to show the falseness and hypocrisy of the "family principle" if it wholly relied on the "property principle"; also, to show how, in these conditions, the family which was initially the primary cell uniting people changed into a form that dissociated people and caused enmity between them. After this story, Shchedrin meant to write just one more, with no plot connection between the two, and be finished with the cycle. However, everything turned out differently.

There were several personages in "The Family Court of Justice"—Arina Petrovna, the formidable mistress of the Golovlyov estate, her sons Stepan—known in the family under the name of Styopka the blockhead, then Porfiry, nicknamed Judas and "the blood-sucker", and the youngest Pavel—a sullen man "who never acted". Though sketchily portrayed, these figures were so true to life and so skillfully done that the readers were profoundly impressed with them.

The author, who was taking a cure abroad, received a lot of complimentary letters from readers in Russia, and also praise from writers with whom he was especially close. G. Z. Yeliseyev, a well-known publicist and Shchedrin's co-editor in *Otechestvenniye Zapiski*, wrote: "I have already told you that Nekrasov is delighted with your 'Family Court of Justice', and Mikhailovsky has spoken of it with as much enthusiasm.... I like it very much myself...." But the opinion which mattered particularly to the author was that of Turgenev, whose aesthetic judgements he valued highly, for all that they often had arguments on questions of ideology. And this is what Turgenev wrote to Shchedrin: "I received the October issue of the magazine last night and, naturally, read your 'Family Court of Justice' first thing. I am extremely pleased with it. All the figures are painted powerfully and truthfully, let alone the mother who is typical and, seeing that this is not her first appearance in your books, you must have taken her from real life, 'in the flesh' so to speak. But the figure of the 'blockhead', a lost soul gone to seed through drink, is especially good. It is so good that one cannot help wondering why does not Saltykov write a big novel, instead of articles, a novel with grouped characters and events, a guiding thought and a

broad scale of execution? To this one might reply that novels and stories are written by others to a certain extent, and as for what Saltykov is doing there is no one to do it save Saltykov. In any case, I liked 'The Family Court of Justice' very much, and I am looking forward to the sequel—a description of 'little Judas's deeds'."

Saltykov was always prey to a lingering doubt in the plastic, artistic strength of his talent, and in his ability to create a fictitious world of living people. He called himself a "chronicler of the moment" and a "historian of the modern scene", and very reluctantly put aside his "magazine work" in favour of fiction or, as he called it, "routine scenes". But this time, the praise coming from Turgenyev, Nekrasov and others defeated his scepticism. As a result, the story which was the 13th in the list of contents became the first chapter of the novel which was destined to become one of the most valuable, though admittedly one of the darkest, gems of Russian literature.

* * *

The Golovlyovs is a novel written on three planes, each of which has its own system of imagery and its own dominant images. The first plane is the chronicle and pictures of life on a country estate during the last years of serfdom and the first years after its abolishment (the period described in the novel covers roughly fifteen years—from the late 1850's to the early 1870's). The second plane is the author's indictment of the "family principle" turned into a fetish of the private-property-minded class. The third plane is the image of emptiness, life denuded of thoughts and ideals, life immersed in the slough of imaginary values, life subordinated to the automatic flow of featureless everyday.

These planes, or themes, are developed as a polyphonic whole, but the volume of sound and the pitch varies for the different "voices".

The theme of Russia's landed gentry runs through all Shchedrin's writings. Beginning from his first major work *Provincial Sketches* and ending with his last book *The Old Times of Poshekhonye*, Shchedrin never tired of chronicling the decline of old Russia's "first estate". In his profoundly critical chronicle, the highest and ruling class of the Russian Empire is never once shown in the bloom of its culture, as we see it in Turgenyev, Goncharov and Tolstoy. With Shchedrin it is just a brute, coercive force, or—as in *The Golov-*

lyovs—a useless force that has spent itself. The family is amazingly lacking in spiritual or cultural interests, and is wholly steeped in lowly practical concerns. Nowhere else in Russian literature is the life of the landowners' class represented with such stark joylessness, except perhaps in Ivan Bunin's later "Sukhodol".

The country estate was the domicile, the home where the life of the landowners' class was rooted. In this novel, the image of the Golovlyovs' country estate is one of the "main characters", just as Krutogorsk is in *Provincial Sketches*, and Glupov in *The History of a Town*. Bringing toponymic images into the fabric of his narrative is a typical feature of Shchedrin's style. Golovlyovo is not a nest of the gentlefolk's culture, not a haven of light, warmth, cosiness and hospitality. Golovlyovo is "hateful". Golovlyovo is death itself, a spiteful, greedy death, forever stalking a fresh victim. "The house felt unpleasantly deserted, and had an un-lived-in deathly smell..." The days here dragged with a cynically naked "emptiness", one after another, senselessly drowning in the "grey abyss of time".

It would be a mistake to think that Shchedrin rejected the artistic truth and poetry of the radiant pictures of country-estate life painted by Turgenev and Tolstoy (his admiration of Turgenev's *A Nest of the Gentry* is well known). But Turgenev and other writers mainly described the upper crust of the landowners' class and their country seats were relatively rare cases of culture. What Shchedrin described in *The Golovlyovs* was the life of "that class of small landowners who, having no work to do, no connection with public life and no political importance, were in their day sheltered by serfdom, but now, with nothing to shelter them, are ending their days in their crumbling country houses". The life of these small landowners was incomparable to the life of the elite, and consequently the process of disintegration, so classically rendered in Shchedrin's books, is incomparably more typical for the bulk of Russia's country families.

There was, however, yet another reason for the unrelieved dark shades in which the Golovlyov chronicle is presented. This can partly be put down to the factual material which the author used for tracing the disintegration of family and family ties. This theme was of profound interest to all big writers in that epoch of industrial revolution and resulting social changes. It was developed from different ideological and artistic aspects by Emile Zola in his monumental series *La Fortune des Rougons*, by Tolstoy in *Anna*

Karenina, by Dostoyevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov*, to mention only three masterpieces.

Shchedrin, moreover, had his personal motives for exploring this theme, which made for the harshness of his analysis of the "family principle" and the sadness of his reflections on the subject. In Dostoyevsky's rough notes for "A Writer's Diary" there is an entry made in 1876, referring to Shchedrin: "We have no family—I remember one of our most gifted satirists saying it to me." In the same notes, dated 1876 and 1877, Dostoyevsky has written twice: "No family (says Shchedrin)."

These words, which had attracted Dostoyevsky's attention, had both a social and a personal meaning. The biographical commentary for *The Golovlyovs* compiled from the family archives of the Saltykovs and from other sources, shows that the oppressive joylessness of the novel reflects some of the writer's impressions gathered from his own family. Not, however, in the plot, but rather in the characters. N. A. Byelogolovy, the writer's best memoirist, friend and doctor, writes: "The Saltykovs were wild and wilful, the relations between the members of this family were quite savagely cruel, sympathy and warmth were utterly foreign to them. These relations may be partly judged from the Golovlyovs' story where the author has described some types from the Saltykov clan and their feuds, but only partly, I repeat, because while drawing the types from real life he largely invented the plot."

The chief character in Shchedrin's indictment of the "family principle" is Arina Petrovna, the hard and formidable mistress of the Golovlyov estate. To cite Turgenev, this character was indeed "taken in the flesh", from real life, the prototype being Shchedrin's own mother—Olga Mikhailovna Saltykova. The image, however, was greatly generalised to show the typical traits and the destinies of the social group to which it belonged. All that is valuable in a person gradually crumbles away in this moribund and inhuman self-owning world where hoarding is the idol to worship. Nature has richly endowed Arina Petrovna, but her talents receive a freakish development, causing the family to break apart.

The word "family" was on her tongue all the time. Serving the family, and in effect the private-ownership fetish of the family, was the psychological *primo motore* of all her business activity, which also predetermined the profoundly tragic results of her life—a disintegration of all family links, and the moral and physical death of her children and grandchildren. The figure of Arina Petrovna, paint-

ed with powerful brush strokes, especially in those tragic moments when only too late she sees the light, belongs to Shchedrin's major achievements. Turgenev wrote to him: "An old woman who weeps at the sight of the rising sun is, what the French call, *une trouvaille*, and altogether her whole figure is excellent. To evoke the reader's compassion for her, without softening a single trait in her character, is something only a big talent could accomplish."

But Shchedrin scaled even greater heights in presenting the image of emptiness—the existence of a person in a vacuum of alienation from other people, from society, from their spiritual values. This image is embodied in the creepy figure of Porphiry (Judas) Golovlyov, who dominates the entire content of the novel. At the end of his road, which took him step by step to the extreme of dissociation, he appears to the reader as a "living ghost, hovering over a throng of other grey ghosts, stirring in all the corners of the abandoned Golovlyov house". The harshly realistic portrayal of Judas is rendered with an all but impressionist palette of sombre half-shades creating the oppressive atmosphere emanated by this utterly dehumanised man.

Interpreting this image as just a hypocrite, which we come across in literature, is insufficiently embracing. Porphiry's hypocrisy is merely one of the spontaneous and not always conscious requirements of his nature. As the author says: "He is not so much hypocrite as a sneaky cad, a liar and a twaddler." A twaddler, mainly. His inner world was filled with "dust and ashes". It contained no moral or social values whatever. But Judas himself was literally enmeshed in a tangle of empty, putrefied maxims. And, consequently, the most frightening thing about this man who was never at a loss for some sanctimonious moral, was that with his "well-meaning" poisonous twaddle he brought dissent and decay into the world about him. In his words there sounded a "cool, almost abstract malice against all living things". The image of Porphiry Golovlyov is by no means restricted to the national soil, social milieu and epoch that engendered him. "Malice is the dissociation of people," said Lev Tolstoy. And Judas Golovlyov is perhaps the most impressive embodiment of malice and dissociation in world literature, spelling ruin for his near ones and for himself. It is an image of the same lasting significance as Shylock, Plyushkin and Smerdyakov.

Ivan Goncharov, another classic of Russian realism, wrote a letter to Shchedrin after reading "Illicit Family Joys"—the one but last chapter—in the magazine where the novel was published in

instalments. Goncharov spoke of the "artistic greatness" of the image of Judas Golovlyov, and said that he understood the nature of this "derelict hero" and the end awaiting him. It could not be suicide. "The catastrophe might be the end of him, but he will not lay hands upon himself," wrote Goncharov. "After all, stabbing oneself with a knife or putting a bullet through one's brain means that one has realised the horror of one's position, the wretchedness of one's fall, it means that one has become aware of a soul within oneself—no, in such a character there is not sufficient strength for this, nor is there any stuff at all from which this strength is made."

Shchedrin, however, found a different end for Porphyry Golovlyov. An enlightener and moralist, who was called "the prophet" by his contemporaries, for whom his image was infused with an ethically biblical pathos, Shchedrin had the courage to show the awakening of conscience—though already useless—even in this spiritually dead character. On one of the last pages of the novel we read: "And suddenly the awful truth dawned upon his conscience—dawned futilely and too late..." The horror of this truth is rendered in Porphyry's last words: "What is it? What has happened? Where are ... *they all*?" A tragic summing up of a life spent in "dissociation" and "emptiness", an existence which has resulted in the loss of "everything" and "everyone"! The thought of self-destruction comes to him, but it is a vague and hesitant thought. The intuition and tact of a great artist and psychologist induced Shchedrin to refrain from clearly stating the circumstances of Porphyry's death. We are left guessing whether he did go that cold night to the churchyard, honestly meaning to "fall with a shriek on his Mamma's grave, and lie prostrate with mortal anguish", or whether he simply froze to death on the road.

Either way, Shchedrin remains true to his philosophy of sceptical optimism and in the finale of his story throws a beam of light, although a thin one, into the gloom that fills this great Russian novel.

Note. For a more detailed historico-literary analysis of the novel, English readers are recommended the article by I. P. Foote entitled "M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin. *The Golovlyov Family*". Forum for Modern Language Studies, St. Andrews, January 1968, v. 4, No. 1, pp. 53-63.—*Auth.*

THE FAMILY COURT OF JUSTICE

Anton Vasilyev, the bailiff of a distant estate, was making a report to his lady, Arina Petrovna Golovlyova, about his trip to Moscow where he had gone to collect taxes from her serfs living there.* When he had finished and had been given leave to go, he suddenly hesitated with an air of mystery as though he had something else to report, something he was in two minds about putting into words.

Arina Petrovna, who could read her people's inmost thoughts, to say nothing of their slightest gestures, at once scented trouble.

"What else is there?" she asked, staring hard at the bailiff.

"That's all," Anton Vasilyev tried to prevaricate.

"Don't lie—there's something else! I can see it from your eyes!"

Anton Vasilyev, however, could not bring himself to speak, and shifted from one foot to the other.

"Now, what is it?" Arina Petrovna cried peremptorily. "Speak! Don't wriggle . . . you turncoat!"

Arina Petrovna liked to give nicknames to members of her domestic and administrative staff. She called Anton Vasilyev a turncoat not because he had ever been caught in some act of perfidy, but because he had a weakness for chatter. The estate he managed had as its centre a big trading village with a number of taverns in it. Anton Vasilyev was fond of drinking a pot of tea there and bragging

* If the property was not in the black-soil zone, only a part of the serfs were engaged in farming, while the rest were allowed to earn their living in town by carting or by working in some other trade, and they had to pay a tax to their owner.—*Ed.*

of his lady's omnipotence—and in doing so said more than he meant to. And as Arina Petrovna was usually engaged in various lawsuits, her bailiff's chatter often disclosed the lady's stratagems before they could be put to the test.

"There is something. That's true..." Anton Vasilyev muttered at last.

"What? What is it?" Arina Petrovna asked nervously.

Being a woman of imperious character and one endowed with a vivid imagination, she instantly drew up a picture of all sorts of contradictions and oppositions, and she saw it so clearly that she turned pale and jumped up from her chair.

"Stepan Vladimirich has sold the house in Moscow..." the bailiff said haltingly.

"Well?"

"He's sold it."

"Why? How? Don't mumble, speak up!"

"Debts, I expect! They don't sell one up for good deeds, that's a fact."

"So it was the police sold it, the court?"

"Must be so. They say the house went for eight thousand at the auction."

Arina Petrovna sank heavily into her chair, her eyes staring at the window. For the first minute she seemed stunned by the news. Had she been told that Stepan Vladimirich had committed murder, or that the Golovlyovo peasants had rebelled and refused to work for her, or that serfdom was toppling, she would have been less impressed. Her lips moved, her eyes looked into the distance but saw nothing. She did not even see the girl Dunyashka make a dash past the window, covering something with her apron, then whirl round, on suddenly seeing her mistress, and slowly walk back (at another time such behaviour would have led to a proper investigation). At last, however, Arina Petrovna recovered and said:

"That's a nice thing to do!"

Several more minutes of ominous silence followed.

"And so you say the police sold the house for eight thousand?"

"That's right."

"Selling his mothers' blessing—the scoundrel!"

Arina Petrovna felt that the news she had just heard required some immediate decision on her part, but she could think of nothing because her mind was a tangle of controversial thoughts. On the one hand, she thought: "The police sold it! But they could not have sold it in a minute! They must have taken an inventory, made a valuation, announced the auction. They sold it for eight thousand, while two years ago she had with her own hands given twelve thousand rubles in hard cash for that very house! Had she known, she might have bought it herself for eight thousand at the auction!" On the other hand, she kept thinking: "The police sold it for eight thousand! His mother's blessing! The scoundrel! To let his mother's blessing go for eight thousand!"

"Who told you?" she asked at last, finally concentrating on the thought that the house had already been sold, and that any hope of acquiring it cheaply was lost to her for ever.

"Ivan Mikhailich, the innkeeper."

"And why didn't he let me know in time?"

"Must have been afraid."

"Afraid! I'll teach him to be afraid! Call him back from Moscow, and the minute he comes—off to the recruiting office to be made a soldier.* Afraid, indeed!"

Serfdom still existed, though the end of it was in sight. Anton Vasilyev had often received the most peculiar orders from his mistress, but the present one was so unexpected that even he felt rather uncomfortable. He could not help thinking of his nickname of "Turncoat". Ivan Mikhailich was a steady, prosperous man, and no one could ever imagine him getting into trouble. Besides, he was his bosom friend and kinsman—and now, suddenly, he was to be sent for a recruit simply because he, Anton Vasilyev, like the turncoat that he was, could not hold his tongue.

"Forgive . . . Ivan Mikhailich, please!" he tried to intercede.

"Out with you . . . you conniver!" Arina Petrovna shouted at him in such a voice that he did not think of persisting in his defence of Ivan Mikhailich.

* During the time described in this novel soldiers recruited into the army had to serve for a period of 25 years.—*Ed.*

But before I go on with my story I will ask the reader to make a closer acquaintance of Arina Petrovna and her family.

Arina Petrovna was a woman of about sixty, but still vigorous and used to having her own way. Her manner was formidable; she managed the vast Golovlyov estates autocratically, giving account to no one; she lived quietly and economically, almost stingily, making no friends with her neighbours, maintaining good relations with the local authorities, and demanding of her children such obedience that they should ask themselves at every step they took, "And what would Mamma say?" Altogether she had an independent, indomitable, and rather shrewish character, these qualities being to a considerable extent fostered by the utter lack of opposition from any member of the Golovlyov family. Her husband was a gay dog, given to drink (Arina Petrovna liked saying of herself that she was neither a wife nor a widow); some of her children were in government service in Petersburg, others had taken after their father and, being in disfavour, were not allowed to take any part in family decisions. Owing to this state of affairs Arina Petrovna had come to feel lonely early in life, and had indeed completely lost the habit of family life, though the word "family" was always on her lips and ostensibly the only motive for her actions was the anxiety to provide for it.

The head of the family, Vladimir Mikhailich Golovlyov, had been known from his youth up for a shiftless and frivolous character, and Arina Petrovna, an exceptionally serious-minded and business-like woman, had never found anything likeable in him. He led an idle and useless life, and spent most of his time shut up in his study, imitating the singing of starlings, the crowing of cocks, etc., and composing so-called "libertine verses". In moments of confidence he boasted that he had been a friend of Barkov* and that the latter had actually given him his death-

* I. S. Barkov (1732-1768)—poet and translator, author of indecent verses and poems circulated in written form. He could not have been Golovlyov's friend as he died before the man was born.—*Ed.*

bed blessing. Arina Petrovna took an instant dislike to her husband's poetry, calling it "filthy buffoonery"; and since Vladimir Mikhailich had married chiefly to have a ready audience for his verses, dissensions were, naturally, not long in coming. As time went on they grew in bitterness and intensity, ending on the part of the wife in a complete and contemptuous indifference to her buffoon of a husband, and on the part of the husband in a heartfelt hatred for the wife—a hatred in which, however, there was a considerable element of fear. The husband called the wife "a witch" and "a devil", and the wife called the husband "a windmill" and "a stringless balalaika". On these terms they lived together for forty odd years, and it never occurred to either of them that there was anything unnatural in a life such as this.

With the years the frivolity in Vladimir Mikhailich did not moderate, but on the contrary became even more provoking. In addition to his poetical exercises in Barkov's style he took to drinking and waylaying housemaids in the corridor. At first Arina Petrovna was disgusted and even upset by her husband's new diversion (though she suffered more from the affront to her authority than from jealousy as such), but afterwards she dismissed it from her mind and merely watched that the hussies should not bring any vodka to the master. Having said to herself once and for all that her husband was no help to her, she devoted all her energies to enlarging her estate, and, indeed, in the forty years of her married life she succeeded in increasing it tenfold. With amazing patience and shrewdness she watched the estates far and near, ascertained, on the quiet, how their owners stood with the Trustees' Council,* and always descended upon auction sales like a bolt from the blue. In the whirl of this fanatic pursuit of acquisition Vladimir Mikhailich retreated further and further into the background and at last became quite a recluse. At the time

* *Trustees' Council*—a body which ran the Foundling Home in Moscow, where asylum was given to orphans and widows mainly of noble birth. The Council maintained its own bank where money could be deposited for safe-keeping and loans could be received against estates and other property. If the loan was not repaid on the dot, the property was sold by auction.—*Ed.*

when our story begins he was a decrepit old man who hardly ever left his bed, and on the rare occasions when he did so it was solely in order to thrust his head through the half-open door of his wife's room and shout, "You devil!"—and disappear again.

Arina Petrovna was scarcely luckier in her children. Her nature was too independent, she was too much of a bachelor, so to speak, to regard children as anything but a burden. She was happiest when she was alone with her accounts and plans of acquisition, when no one interrupted her business conversations with bailiffs, village elders, housekeepers, etc. Children were to her merely a part of the preordained framework of life, against which she did not think she had the right to rebel though they did not stir a single chord of her inner being, which was entirely taken up with the numberless details of practical life. She had four children: three sons and a daughter. Of her eldest son and of her daughter she did not even like to speak; she was more or less indifferent to her youngest son, and only for the second, Porphiry, she had some feeling, though it was more akin to fear than affection.

Her eldest son, Stepan Vladimirich, with whom the present story is chiefly concerned, was known in his family under the names of Styopka the blockhead and Styopka the rascal. He had very early fallen into disfavour, and had from a child been something between a pariah and a clown in the family. Unfortunately he was a gifted boy who absorbed quickly and too readily the impressions of his environment. He inherited from his father his inexhaustible frivolity, and from his mother the faculty for quickly detecting people's weak points. Owing to his first characteristic feature he soon became his father's favourite—which made his mother dislike him all the more. Often, while Arina Petrovna was away on business, the father and the growing son would withdraw to the study adorned with a portrait of Barkov, read libertine verses and gossip, the "witch", i.e., Arina Petrovna, being the chief subject of their abuse. But the "witch" seemed to scent what they were up to: she would quietly drive up to the house, tiptoe to the study door and listen to the lively talk. Styopka the blockhead would be severely whipped there and then, but

it did no good; he was insensitive both to beatings and to admonitions, and in half an hour's time was at his pranks again. He would either cut the maid Anyutka's kerchief to pieces or put some flies into sleeping Vasyutka's mouth, or would steal into the kitchen and there pinch a pie (Arina Petrovna kept her children halfstarved for the sake of economy), which, it is true, he would immediately share with his brothers.

"You ought to be killed!" Arina Petrovna repeated to him constantly. "I'll kill you and won't have to answer for it! The tsar himself wouldn't punish me for it!"

This constant humiliation could not but have its effect on the boy's soft, easy-going nature. Instead of making him embittered or rebellious, it developed a servile character, one given to clowning, with a complete lack of prudence or of any sense of proportion. Such people fall easy prey to any influence, and may become anything: drunkards, beggars, clowns, and even criminals.

At the age of twenty Stepan Golovlyov finished the course of studies at one of the Moscow Gymnasiums and entered the University. But his student days were bitter. In the first place, his mother allowed him just enough money not to starve to death; secondly, he had not the slightest inclination to work, but instead he had in him a cursed giftedness which expressed itself chiefly in a talent for mimicking; thirdly, he suffered from a constant craving for company, and could not bear to be by himself for a moment. And so he took up the easy part of a hanger-on and *pique-assiette*; and his readiness to fall in with every prank soon made him popular with the richer students. They admitted him to their circle, however, on the understanding that he was not their equal but merely a sort of clown, and that was, indeed, how he came to be thought of. Having once taken this line he naturally sank lower and lower, and by the end of the fourth year he was not even amusing any longer. However, owing to his faculty for grasping quickly and remembering all that he heard he passed his examinations successfully and obtained his degree.

When he appeared before his mother with a diploma, Arina Petrovna merely shrugged her shoulders and said,

"Surprising!" She kept him for a month in the country and then sent him off to Petersburg with an allowance of a hundred paper rubles* a month. He wandered from one government office to another. He had no powerful friends or connections, and no desire at all to make his way by his own efforts. The young man's idle mind had so lost all habit of concentration that even such bureaucratic tasks as reports and résumés were too much for him. Golovlyov struggled on in Petersburg for four years, and at last came to the conclusion that he had no hope of ever rising above an office clerk. In answer to his complaints Arina Petrovna wrote him a wrathful letter beginning with the words, "I was certain of it beforehand", and ending with an order to come to Moscow. There, at a council of her favourite serfs, it was decided to secure a post for Styopka the block-head at the law-courts, putting him under the surveillance of an attorney who had since time immemorial acted for the Golovlyov family. What Stepan Vladimirovich did at the courts and how he behaved, remains unknown, but in three years' time he was no longer there. Then Arina Petrovna decided on an extreme measure: she "chucked her son a cut" which, however, was at the same time to represent "his mother's blessing". This "cut" was a house in Moscow, for which Arina Petrovna had paid twelve thousand rubles.

For the first time in his life Stepan Golovlyov breathed freely. The house was likely to bring in a thousand silver rubles a year, and by comparison with the past this sum seemed like a fortune to him. He kissed his mother's hand with real feeling ("Mind now, you blockhead, don't expect anything more of me!" Arina Petrovna said as he did so) and promised to prove worthy of the favour bestowed on him. But, alas! he was so unused to handling money, his conception of practical life was so absurd, that the fabulous thousand rubles a year lasted him a very short time. In some four or five years he was completely bankrupt and was only too glad to enlist in the home guard as a substitute.** His regiment, however, had only marched as far

* A paper ruble was worth 27½ kopeks.—*Ed.*

** The home guard was called up in wartime, in case of dire

as Kharkov when peace was made, and Golovlyov returned to Moscow once more. By that time his house had been sold. He wore top-boots, a shabby soldier's uniform and had a hundred rubles in his pocket. He tried to speculate with that money, that is, he gambled at cards, and soon lost it all. Then he took to visiting the rich peasants of his mother who had homes in Moscow; he dined with one, begged for a quarter of a pound of tobacco from another, borrowed a trifle from a third. But at last a moment came when he found himself, so to speak, up against a wall. He was nearly forty and he had to admit that he did not have the strength to continue this tramp-like existence further. The only thing that remained for him was to go back to Golovlyovo.

The Golovlyovs' second child was their daughter Anna, whom Arina Petrovna did not like to mention either.

The fact was that Arina Petrovna had had her own plans about Anna, but the girl, far from justifying her hopes, did a scandalous thing that all the district talked of. When Anna had left boarding-school Arina Petrovna settled her at Golovlyovo, hoping to make of her an unpaid secretary and book-keeper, but instead Anna eloped one fine night with Cornet Ulanov.

"They went and got married without their parents' blessing just like a couple of dogs!" Arina Petrovna complained. "Thank heaven that at least the man put a wedding-ring on her finger! Another one would have simply taken his pleasure and made off! You might whistle for him then!"

Arina Petrovna acted as resolutely in her daughter's case as in the case of her eldest son: she went and "chucked her a cut". She gave her a lump sum of five thousand rubles and a miserable little village with thirty serfs and a dilapidated house in which every window let in a draught and every floor-board was rotten. In a couple of years the newlyweds spent their money and the cornet fled in an unknown direction, leaving Anna with twin

necessity. During the Crimean War (1853-1856) tsar Nicholas I appealed to all the classes to join up. Some wealthy noblemen, however, hired their moneyless brothers to serve in their stead.—*Ed.*

daughters: Anninka and Lubinka. Three months later Anna died, and Arina Petrovna had, willy-nilly, to take the orphans into her home; she put the babies in the lodge and appointed a one-eyed old woman, Palashka, to look after them.

"God has many mercies," she said; "the orphans won't eat me out of the house, and they will be a comfort to me in my old age! God has taken away one daughter and given me two."

At the same time she wrote to her son Porphyry Vladimirich: "Your sister died as disreputably as she lived, leaving me to shoulder the burden of her two brats."

It is only fair to admit, cynical as the observation may seem, that both these cases when "cuts were chucked" by her caused Arina Petrovna no financial detriment and, on the contrary, they served indirectly to increase the Golovlyov property by decreasing the number of its shareholders. For Arina Petrovna was a woman of principle, and having once "chucked a cut" to her disappointing offspring, considered all her duties towards them discharged. It never entered her head that she might one day have to apportion something to her orphaned grand-daughters. She merely tried to squeeze as much as possible out of the small estate she had given to their mother, investing the money in the Trustees' Council and saying as she did so: "Here I am saving money for the orphans too, and I don't charge anything for the keep and the care of them! God will repay me, maybe, for what I spend on them!"

Arina Petrovna's younger children, Porphyry and Pavel, lived in Petersburg; the first was in the civil service and the second in the army. Porphyry was married, Pavel was a bachelor.

Porphyry Vladimirich was known in the family under three names: "Young Judas", "blood-sucker", and "mealy-mouth", all three having been given him in childhood by Styopka the blockhead. Ever since he was a baby he liked to cuddle close to his "dear friend Mamma", to kiss her unobtrusively on the shoulder and occasionally to bring her a few tales. He would quietly open the door of Mamma's room, steal noiselessly into a corner, and sit

down, his fascinated look fixed on her while she wrote or made up accounts. But even in those early days Arina Petrovna felt somewhat suspicious of her son's ingratiating ways. Even at that time his intent stare seemed to her enigmatic, and she could not decide what precisely it held—venom or filial respect.

"I can't make out that look in his eyes," she would reflect occasionally. "He looks at you sometimes and, well, it's just as though he were springing a trap on you. Just oozing venom, just luring you on!"

She recalled the significant details of what happened just before Porphiry was born. There lived in their house at the time a certain pious and sagacious old man known as "Porphiry the holy man", whom she always consulted when she wanted to know something about the future. When she asked this old man how soon she was to be confined and whether it was a son or a daughter God was sending her, he made no direct answer but crowed three times like a cock and then muttered, "A young cock, a young cock, his claw sharp as a saw; he threatens the hen, crowing now and again; the hen cries 'cluck-cluck', but too late for her luck!"—that was all. But three days later (that was it—he crowed three times!) she gave birth to a son (that was it—a young cock!), who was christened Porphiry, in honour of the holy old man.

The first half of the prophecy had come true, but what could be the meaning of the mysterious words: "The hen cries 'cluck-cluck', but too late for her luck"?

Arina Petrovna wondered about it as she threw stealthy glances at Porphiry sitting in his corner and gazing at her with his enigmatic expression.

And as for Porphiry, he went on sitting there meekly and quietly, looking at her so intently that tears came into his wide-open eyes. It was as though he guessed the doubts stirring in his mother's heart and was behaving in this manner so that his meekness should disarm the most watchful suspicion. Even at the risk of annoying his mother he always thrust himself forward, saying as it were: "Look at me! I don't conceal anything. I am all obedience and devotion, and not through fear alone but in all sincerity." And no matter how strong her convic-

tion that Porphyry the scoundrel was merely making up to her while his eyes were setting a trap, even as staunch a heart as hers could not resist such overwhelming devotion. In spite of herself her hand sought out the best piece on the dish to give it to her affectionate son, although the very sight of that son raised a vague uneasy foreboding in her mind of something evil and obscure.

Pavel was a complete contrast to his brother Porphyry. He was the most perfect instance of a man whose character never asserted itself in any action whatsoever. As a boy he did not show the slightest inclination for study, or games, or company, but liked to be by himself, away from everyone else. He would find a secluded corner and would sit there, pouting and day-dreaming. He would imagine that he had had too much oatmeal to eat and his legs had grown very thin and that he could not do his lessons. Or that he was not Pavel, a gentleman's son, but Davidka the shepherd, and that he had a lump on his forehead like Davidka and was cracking a whip instead of doing lessons. Arina Petrovna would look at him for a while and her heart would boil within her.

"Why do you sit there sulking?" she would shout at him, unable to contain herself. "Is it that you're harbouring spite already? You never think of coming to your mother and saying, 'Kiss me, Mamma dear.'"

Pavel left his corner and walked up to his mother reluctantly, as though someone were pushing him in the back.

"Kiss me," he repeated in a voice that seemed unnaturally low in a child, "Mamma dear."

"Off with you, you . . . sneak! You think that if you hide in a corner you'll deceive me! I see right through you, my dear! I see all your schemes as plain as can be."

Pavel walked back with the same slow steps and hid in his corner again.

Years passed, and Pavel Vladimirich gradually developed into an apathetic, mysteriously sullen man whose character never expressed itself in action. He may have been kind but he never did a good turn to anyone; he may have had brains but he never did anything particularly intelligent. He was hospitable but no one appre-

ciated his hospitality; he readily spent money but it never did any good or gave any pleasure to anyone; he never wronged anyone but no one gave him credit for it; he was honest but no one was ever heard to say, "How honourably Pavel Golovlyov behaved on such and such an occasion." He was often rude to his mother and at the same time feared her like fire. I repeat, he was a sullen man but there was nothing but inertia behind his sullenness.

When both brothers were grown-up the difference in their characters showed most clearly in their attitude to their mother. Regularly every week Porphiry sent her a long epistle in which he informed her at length about all the particulars of Petersburg life and assured her in choice expressions of his boundless filial affection. Pavel wrote seldom and briefly, sometimes quite enigmatically, as though every word were extracted from him with pincers.

"Dearest Mamma, the money, such and such a sum, on such and such a date, has been duly received by me from your agent, the peasant Yerofeyev," Porphiry Vladimich would inform his mother, "and for sending the above sum to be spent on my keep, in accordance with your gracious wish, dear Mamma, I express my heartfelt gratitude and with sincere filial devotion kiss your hands. The only thing that causes me grief and anxiety is the fear lest you overtax your precious health by your unremitting solicitude in providing not only for our needs but even for our whims. I do not know what my brother thinks, but I..." and so on, and so on. And Pavel would write on a similar occasion: "Dear parent, the money, such and such a sum, on such and such a date, has been received by me and according to my reckoning it is six and a half rubles short of my allowance, for which reminder I respectfully beg your pardon." When Arina Petrovna reprimanded her children for prodigality (this happened frequently though she had no serious cause for it), Porphiry always received her remarks with meekness and wrote: "I know, my darling Mamma, how onerous is the burden you are carrying for the sake of us, your unworthy children; I know that by our unworthy behaviour we very often betray rather than justify your

motherly concern for us, and that, worst of all, owing to a natural human frailty, we actually forget this, for which I make my sincere filial apologies, hoping in time to free myself from this vice and to be circumspect in the use of money which you send for my keep and other expenses, dearest Mamma." But Pavel answered as follows: "Dear parent! Though you have not yet had to pay any of my debts, I nevertheless unquestioningly accept your reprimand for being a spendthrift, of which I earnestly beg you to be assured." The two brothers responded as differently to Arina Petrovna's letter with the news of their sister Anna's death. Porphyry wrote: "I am stricken with grief at the news that Anna Vladimirovna, my beloved sister and dear companion of my childhood, has departed this life, and my grief is all the greater at the thought that you, dearest Mamma, have been sent another cross to bear in the persons of the two orphans. Surely it should be enough that you, the benefactress of us all, are denying yourself in everything and, with no thought for your health, are devoting all your strength so that your family should be provided not merely with what are necessities, but with luxuries as well! Truly, sinful as it may be, one cannot help repining sometimes. And in my opinion the only comfort for you in your present trouble, dearest, is to recall as often as possible what Christ Himself had to endure."

Pavel wrote on the same occasion: "I have received the news of my poor sister's untimely death. I hope, however, that the Almighty will give her rest in His abode, though this we may never know."

Arina Petrovna read her sons' letters over and over again, trying to guess which of them would prove to be her undoer. She would read Porphyry's letter, and it would seem to her that he was the villain.

"How he writes, the scoundrel! Twisting and turning his tongue!" she exclaimed. "It's not for nothing that Styopka the blockhead has nicknamed him Young Judas! There's not a word of truth in what he says! It's all lies—'darling Mamma', and about my burdens, and about the cross I have to bear. . . . He does not mean any of it at all!"

She would then take up Pavel's letter, and again she would fancy that this was the real villain.

"He may be stupid, but see how he sticks pins into his mother! 'Of which I earnestly beg you to be assured. . . .' The wily devil! I'll teach him 'earnestly to be assured'! I'll chuck him a cut as I did to that blockhead Styopka, then he'll know what I think of his 'assurances'!"

And in conclusion a truly tragic wail escaped from the mother's breast:

"Who am I saving all this for? Who am I scraping and saving, going short of sleep and of food for? Who is it all for?"

Such was the situation in the Golovlyov family at the moment when the bailiff Anton Vasilyev told Arina Petrovna that Styopka the blockhead had squandered the cut that had been chucked him, which owing to its low sale price had already acquired the peculiar significance of "a mother's blessing".

Arina Petrovna sat in her bedroom, unable to sort out her feelings. She felt something stirring within her but she could not make out what it was. The most experienced psychologist could not have determined whether there was in it, amazing as it might seem, a little unacknowledged pity for the man who was after all her son, or whether it was merely the rankling from the affront to her authority: all her feelings and sensations were in a tangle and kept replacing one another in rapid succession. At last the fear that she would once more be burdened with the "hateful one" stood out clearly against the confused mass of her other thoughts.

"That wretch Anna saddled me with her brats and now there's the blockhead," she reflected.

She sat thus for a long time, staring at one point and not saying a word. They brought her dinner, which she hardly touched; they came to say: "The master is asking for vodka," and she flung them the store-room key without looking round. After dinner she went to the icon-room, had all the sanctuary candles to be lit, and locked herself in, giving orders for the bath-house to be heated. All these were unmistakable symptoms that the mistress

was angry, and so the house grew still at once, died down as it were. The maids walked on tiptoe; the housekeeper, Akulina, rushed about like one distracted: they were to make jam that afternoon, the fruit had already been prepared, but there were no orders from the mistress; Matvei the gardener came to ask if the peaches were to be picked, but beat a hasty retreat from the servants' room with a flea in his ear.

Having said her prayers and taken her bath, Arina Petrovna felt more at peace and sent for Anton Vasilyev once more.

"Well, and what is the blockhead doing?" she asked.

"Moscow is big—it would take more than a year to go all round it!"

"But he has to eat and drink, hasn't he?"

"Our peasants help him by. Some will give him dinner, from others he'll cadge ten kopeks for tobacco."

"And who allowed them to give it him?"

"Why, Madam, would the people grudge it? They give alms to strangers, and is it likely they would refuse their own master?"

"I'll teach them . . . the almsgivers! I'll send the blockhead to your village, and let you all keep him at your own expense."

"As you please, Madam."

"What? What did you say?"

"I said, 'It is as you please, Madam.' If you say so we'll keep him."

"Keep him . . . I should think so! Don't you be too free with your tongue!"

There was a silence. But it was not for nothing Anton Vasilyev had been nicknamed by his mistress a turncoat. He could not keep quiet and began fidgeting, longing to tell her something more.

"He is a sharp one!" he said at last. "They say he had a hundred rubles when he returned from the campaign. A hundred rubles is not much, but he could have lived on it for a time. . . ."

"Well?"

"But he wanted to mend his fortunes, you see, and speculated with it. . . ."



ries, too . . . but how could one take a burly man of forty to a penitentiary?

In short, Arina Petrovna was in utter confusion at the thought of the troubles that threatened her peaceful existence with the arrival of Styopka the blockhead.

"I'll send him to your village, and you support him yourself!" she threatened the bailiff. "Not at the expense of the estate, but at your own!"

"What have I done to deserve this, Madam?"

"What? Croaking, that's what. Caw, caw! 'He surely will!' . . . Out of my sight . . . you crow!"

Anton Vasilyev turned on his heel sharply, but Arina Petrovna stopped him again.

"Stop! Wait! So it's true that he is coming to Golovlyovo?" she asked.

"Would I deceive you, Madam! Sure enough he said, 'I'm going to the old woman to eat humble pie!'"

"I'll show him what sort of pie the old woman has in store for him!"

"Ah, Madam, he won't bother you long!"

"Why not?"

"He coughs a lot . . . he keeps clutching at his left side. He's not long for this world!"

"It's the ones like him, my good man, who live all the longer! He'll outlive us all. He'll go on coughing and coughing—it's nothing to a great big animal like him! Well, we shall see. You go now! I have to see to things."

Arina Petrovna spent the whole evening thinking, and finally decided to summon a family council to settle the blockhead's future. Such constitutional measures were not in character with her, but this time she decided to forego the traditions of autocracy so that public opinion should not hold her personally responsible for the decision. But she had no doubts as to the result of the family council, and so it was with a light heart that she sat down to write to Porphiry and Pavel, ordering them to come immediately to Golovlyovo.

While all this was going on, the cause of the excitement, Styopka the blockhead, was already on his way

from Moscow to Golovlyovo. He was travelling in one of those diligences in which petty tradesmen and peasants living in town used to travel in the old days—and still do in some places—when going for a visit to their native village. The diligence was going in the direction of Vladimir, and the same kind-hearted innkeeper Ivan Mikhailich paid Stepan's fare and bought him food on the journey.

"That's what you must do, Stepan Vladimirich," he said to Stepan, "step out of the diligence at the cross-roads and go on to your Mamma on foot, dressed as you are!"

"That's it, that's it!" Stepan Vladimirich agreed. "It's not far from the cross-roads—only ten miles! I'll foot it in no time. I'll come before her just as I am, covered with dust and dirt!"

"When your Mamma sees you like that maybe she'll take pity on you!"

"Of course she will! She is sure to! Mother is a kind-hearted old woman, after all."

Stepan Golovlyov was not yet forty, but he looked at least fifty. Life had played such havoc with him that there was no trace of a gentleman's son left in him, nor the slightest indication that he had once been to a university and that the light of education had been shed on him. He was a man disproportionately tall, narrow-chested, with long apeline arms, thin from undernourishment, dirty, and unkempt. His face was bloated, his hair and beard dishevelled and turning grey, his voice loud but hoarse as though he had a cold, and his protruding eyes were inflamed partly from excessive drinking and partly from constant exposure to the wind. He wore a shabby grey military jacket, fearfully soiled; the silver braid on it had been ripped off and sold. On his feet he had rusty-looking high boots, much patched and down at the heel. A shirt that was almost black, as if covered with soot, showed under his unbuttoned jacket; with true army cynicism he called it a flea-trap. He looked morosely from under his brows; but this moroseness was not an expression of some inward discontent, but was due to a vague fear that any minute now, like some worm, he might perish from hunger.

He talked unceasingly, disconnectedly, jumping from subject to subject; he talked when Ivan Mikhailich listened and even when he dropped asleep to the music of his voice. Stepan Vladimirovich was fearfully uncomfortable in the diligence. As there were four people crowded in it, he had to sit with his feet tucked under him, and after some three or four miles this made his knees ache unbearably. But he talked constantly in spite of the pain. Clouds of dust burst in at the side windows; slanting rays of the sun sometimes found their way in and suddenly lit up the inside of the carriage as with a bright flame—and he talked on and on.

"Yes, old man, I've been through a lot in my life," he said; "it's time I had a rest! After all, I am not likely to eat her out of house and home, and surely she can find a crust to spare for me! What do you think, Ivan Mikhailich?"

"Your mother has plenty to spare."

"But not for me—is that what you mean? Yes, old chap, she has pots of money, but she grudges a copper if it's for me. She has always hated me, the old witch! Why, I don't know. But she can do nothing to me now—you can't draw blood from a stone! I don't care what I do! I'll make her cough up! If she tries to turn me out, I won't go! If she doesn't give me any food, I'll help myself! I have served my country, brother, and now it's everybody's duty to help me. One thing I fear, she won't give me any tobacco—and that's damnable!"

"Yes, I am afraid you'll have to say good-bye to tobacco."

"Then I'll tackle the bailiff—can't he, the bald-headed old devil, give some to his master?"

"He can, of course. But what if your mamma forbids him?"

"Well, then I shall be done for. Tobacco is the only luxury left me of all my former magnificence! When I had money, old chap, I used to smoke a quarter of Zhukov's tobacco a day!"

"You will have to say good-bye to vodka also."

"That's damnable too. Vodka is good for my health—it loosens my cough. You know, when we were marching

to Sevastopol, we had nearly three gallons each before we got even as far as Serpukhov!"

"Good and sozzled, were you?"

"I don't remember. I believe we were. I got as far as Kharkov, brother, but for the life of me I don't remember anything. I only remember we marched through villages and through towns and that a government contractor made a speech to us in Tula. He shed tears, the scoundrel! Yes, our Mother Russia did go through a lot at the time! Contractors, receivers, and what not—it's a wonder she pulled through!"

"And your Mamma has made a bit of profit out of this, too. More than half of the recruits from our estate did not come back from the war, and the government, they say, is giving the owners a certificate for every one of these. And those certificates are worth over four hundred rubles each."

"Yes, that mother of ours is a clever woman! She ought to have been a statesman instead of wasting her time at Golovlyovo, making jam! Do you know what? She's been unfair to me, she's wronged me, and yet I respect her! She is devilishly clever—that's the chief thing! If it had not been for her, where should we have been now? We'd have nothing but Golovlyovo—a mere hundred serfs! And see what a hell of a lot she has added to it!"

"Your brothers will be very well off."

"They will. But I shall have nothing—that's certain. Yes, old chap, I am ruined root and branch! And my brothers will be rich, the blood-sucker especially. He will worm himself in anywhere. But he'll be the undoing of the old witch yet: he will suck the estate and the capital out of her—I have a sharp nose for that sort of thing! Now, my brother Pavel is a good sort! He'll send me some tobacco on the quiet—you'll see! As soon as I come to Golovlyovo I'll send a letter to him: have a heart, dear brother, I'll say! Ah! If I were rich now!"

"What would you do?"

"To begin with, I'd shower gold on you."

"But why on me? Think of yourself, I am content as it is, thanks to your mother."

"Oh no, dear fellow, you're all wrong there! I would

make you commander-in-chief over all the estates! Yes, my friend, you have given food and shelter to an old soldier—I am grateful to you. If it wasn't for you I should be trudging on foot to my ancestral home! I'd give you your freedom right away and spread all my treasures out before you—eat, drink and be merry! What sort of a man did you think me?"

"No, sir, you leave me out of it. What else would you do if you were rich?"

"Secondly, I would get myself a moppet at once. In Kursk we went to have a service sung to Our Lady, and I saw a wench . . . ah! a nice little bit of goods! Would you believe it, she could not stand still a minute!"

"But perhaps she wouldn't want to become a moppet?"

"And what is money for? What is filthy lucre for? If one hundred thousand isn't enough, take two! If I have money, brother, I don't stick at anything so long as I have my pleasure! To tell you the truth I did offer her three rubles through the sergeant at the time—but she wanted five, the greedy creature!"

"And you didn't happen to have five, did you?"

"I don't know, old chap, I tell you, it's as though I had dreamt it all. She may have come to me for all I know, but I don't remember. The whole of our march, the two months of it—I remember nothing! This has never happened to you, I suppose?"

But Ivan Mikhailich was silent. Stepan Vladimirich gave him a close look and saw that his companion was nodding his head rhythmically; whenever his nose almost touched his knees, he would start comically and then begin nodding again.

"There now!" Golovlyov said. "Rocked to sleep already! Can't keep awake! You've grown too fat, brother, what with the meals and teas at your inn! And as for me, I can't sleep! Sleep doesn't come to me and there's nothing for it! Well, what shall I do now? The fruit of the vine happens. . . ."

Golovlyov glanced round him and discovered that all his other fellow-passengers were asleep too. The tradesman who sat next to him kept knocking his head against the bar, but this did not disturb his sleep. His face was shiny

as though covered with varnish and a number of flies had settled round his mouth.

"What if all these flies were dispatched into his gullet now, wouldn't it make him jump!" the happy thought occurred to Golovlyov suddenly, and his hand at once began creeping towards the man to carry out his intention, but half-way he suddenly remembered something and stopped.

"No, no more pranks—enough! Slumber in peace, my friends! And meanwhile I'll . . . where did he stow away the bottle? Ah, here it is, the pet! Come here, now! O Lord, bless Thy people!" he sang in an undertone, taking the bottle out of a hempen bag fixed to the side of the carriage and putting it to his lips. "There, that's better now! It's warmed me up. Shall I have some more? No, this will do . . . it's a good fifteen miles to the station. I'll have time enough to get fuddled. . . . Or shall I have some more now? Ah, damnation take this vodka! You see a bottle and you just can't keep away from it. Drink is bad, but drink I must, for I can't sleep! If only sleep would come to me!"

Taking a few more gulps from the bottle he put it back into the bag and began filling his pipe.

"Isn't that nice," he said. "We've had a drink and now we'll have a smoke! The old witch won't give me any tobacco—he is right there. I wonder if she'll give me anything to eat? I expect she'll be sending me her leavings! Ah me! I had money too—and now there's none! I was a man—and I'm no more. That's how it is in this world; today you have all the food and drink you want, you live for your own pleasure and enjoy your pipe, 'and tomorrow—man, where art thou?'"* But I ought to have a bite of something! I drink and drink like a leaky tub, and I never have a proper meal. And doctors say liquor is only good for one if there's appropriate nutriment to go with it, as Bishop Smaragd said when we were marching through Oboyan. Was it Oboyan? I'm damned if I know, perhaps it was Kromy. That's not the point though, the thing is to find some food now. I seem to remember he put a

* A line from the popular ode "On the Death of Prince Meshchersky" by G. R. Derzhavin (1743-1816).—*Ed.*

sausage and three French loaves in his bag. Too stingy to buy some caviare, of course! Just look how he sleeps! What tunes he plays with his nose! I suppose he's hidden the food under his seat."

He fumbled round him but could find nothing.

"Ivan Mikhailich! Hey, Ivan Mikhailich!" he called.

Ivan Mikhailich woke up and did not seem to understand for a moment how he came to sit opposite his master.

"I was just beginning to doze off!" he said at last.

"Never mind, old chap, sleep on! I only meant to ask, where is our provision bag?"

"Hungry? But mustn't you have a drink first?"

"There's something in that! Where have you put the bottle?"

Having had another drink Stepan Vladimirich tackled the sausage, which proved to be hard as stone, salty as salt itself, and encased in such tough skin that he had to use the sharp point of the knife to pierce it.

"Sturgeon would be just the thing now," he said.

"You must excuse me, sir, I forgot all about it. I remembered it in the morning, and even told my wife to be sure and remind me about the sturgeon—and then it completely slipped my mind!"

"Doesn't matter, sausage will do. We ate worse things than that on the march. You know, Papa told me of an Englishman who betted another Englishman that he would eat a dead cat—and he did!"

"You don't say so! He did?"

"He did. But he was sick afterwards. Rum cured him. He drank two bottles at a go and was as fit as a fiddle. And then there was another Englishman who betted he would eat nothing but sugar for a whole year."

"Did he win too?"

"No, he croaked just two days before the year was out. But what about yourself? Why don't you have a tot?"

"Never drink it."

"You fill yourself up with tea instead? That's wrong, old man; that's why you are growing a belly. One must be careful with tea: drink a cup and top it off with a glass of vodka. Tea tightens the cough and vodka loosens it. Isn't that so?"

"I wouldn't know; you're learned people, you should know best."

"That's right. When we were on the march we had no time to bother about such things as tea and coffee. But vodka is the best bet: you screw the flask open, pour some out, drink and have done. They drove us along much too fast—so fast that I didn't have a wash in ten days!"

"You have had a hard time of it, sir."

"Well, yes, it's no joke marching along the high road! It wasn't so bad going out—people gave us things, treated us to dinners, and there was plenty of drink. But on the way back they weren't treating us any more."

Golovlyov went on chewing hard on the sausage and at last swallowed a piece.

"It's a bit salty, this sausage," he said. "But I am not particular! Mother isn't going to provide me with dainty fare, either: a plateful of cabbage soup and a bowl of porridge, and that's all."

"God is merciful, she may give you a piece of pie on holidays."

"No tea, no tobacco, no vodka—you are right there. They say she has taken to playing cards lately—perhaps that will help me. She might call me in to have a game and give me some tea. But as for the rest—good-bye to all that!"

They stopped at a station for some four hours to feed the horses. Golovlyov had finished the bottle by then and was very hungry. The passengers had gone into the station inn to have their dinner.

After wandering about the yard, peeping into the back garden and the horses' trough, scaring the pigeons and even trying to go to sleep in the coach, Stepan Vladimich came to the conclusion that the best thing for him was to follow the other passengers into the station inn. Bowls of cabbage soup were steaming on the table and at the side Ivan Mikhailich was cutting up a big piece of meat into small bits on a wooden trencher. Golovlyov sat down at a distance and lit his pipe, wondering how he should go about getting some dinner for himself.

"I hope you're enjoying your meal, gentlemen!" he said at last. "The soup is rather good, I fancy."

"It isn't bad," Ivan Mikhailich answered. "Why don't you order some, sir?"

"No, I merely mentioned it; I am not hungry."

"Not hungry, indeed! You've only had a piece of sausage, and the cursed stuff does nothing but blow out your belly. Have some soup! I'll ask them to serve you separately, and you'll have a nice meal! Lay the table for the gentleman apart, my good woman—that's right!"

The passengers began eating in silence and only exchanged knowing looks. Golovlyov guessed that they saw through him, though during the journey he acted the part of a master rather brazenly, calling Ivan Mikhailich his treasurer. He frowned and pulled harder at his pipe, letting out clouds of smoke. He would have liked to refuse the food, but the demands of hunger were so insistent that he pounced on the bowl of soup put before him like a beast of prey and instantly emptied it. As soon as he had satisfied his hunger his self-confidence returned, and he said, turning to Ivan Mikhailich with perfect ease:

"Well, my dear treasurer, you settle up for me, and I'll go to the hayloft to have a snooze."

He waddled to the hayloft, and as this time his stomach was full, he slept like a top. At five o'clock he was up and about. Seeing that the horses were standing by the empty trough rubbing their heads against the side, he roused the driver:

"Snoring away, the rascal!" he shouted. "We are in a hurry and he is having pleasant dreams!"

He went on in this manner until they reached the station where the road turned off to Golovlyovo. Only then did Stepan Vladimirich sober a little. His courage obviously began to fail him and he grew silent. Now it was Ivan Mikhailich who tried to cheer him, persuading him above all things to part with his pipe.

"As you come near the estate, sir, throw it into the nettles; you'll find it afterwards!"

At last the horses that were to take Ivan Mikhailich farther on were ready. The moment of parting came.

"Good-bye, old man," said Golovlyov in a faltering voice, kissing Ivan Mikhailich. "She will be the death of me!"

"God is merciful, now, don't you be too frightened!"

"She will be the death of me!" Stepan Vladimirich repeated with such conviction that Ivan Mikhailich had to drop his eyes.

Saying this, Golovlyov sharply turned and strode off down the by-road, leaning on a knotty stick he had just cut from a tree.

Ivan Mikhailich followed him with his eyes for a short while and then rushed after him.

"I'll tell you what, sir," he said, catching him up. "When I was cleaning your coat this morning I saw a three-ruble note in the side pocket—mind you don't drop it."

Stepan Vladimirich hesitated, not knowing how he ought to act in the circumstances. At last he stretched out his hand to Ivan Mikhailich and said with tears in his eyes:

"I see . . . tobacco money for an old soldier . . . thank you! But as for the rest . . . she will be the death of me, my friend! Mark my words—she will!"

With these words Golovlyov went away, and in another five minutes his grey military cap could be seen a long way off, appearing and disappearing among the thick growth of young trees. The hour was still early—a little after five; a golden morning mist floated over the road, and the rays of the sun, just risen above the horizon, barely filtered through; the grass glistened; the air was filled with the scent of fir-trees, mushrooms, and wild berries; the road zigzagged across a low-lying plain teeming with flocks of birds. But Stepan Vladimirich saw none of this; all his light-heartedness suddenly left him and he walked as though he were going to the Last Judgement. One thought filled his whole being to overflowing: another three or four hours and there would be no going farther. He recalled his former life at Golovlyovo and he fancied that the doors of a damp vault were opening before him and the moment he stepped over the threshold they would slam shut—and that would be the end of him. He recalled other details as well which did not concern him directly but which aptly characterised Golovlyovo ways. There was his uncle Mikhail Petrovich (in common parlance "rowdy Mishka"), who was one of the unloved sons too, and who had been exiled by Stepan's grandfather Pyotr

Ivanich to Golovlyovo, where he lived in the servants' hall and ate from the same bowl with the dog Trezorka. There was also his aunt Vera Mikhailovna, who had been kept out of charity at Golovlyovo and had died "from abstinence" because Arina Petrovna used to reproach her with every mouthful she swallowed at dinner and with every log of wood burned for warming her room. Something very similar was in store for him. In his imagination he saw an endless succession of bleak days vanishing into a grey, yawning abyss, and he instinctively closed his eyes. Henceforth he would be at the mercy of the malicious old woman—not even malicious but petrified in an apathetic tyranny. This woman would be the death of him, not through tormenting but through forgetting him. There would be no one to speak to, there would be nowhere to escape—she would be everywhere, imperious, contemptuous, paralysing. The thought of this inevitable future filled him with such anguish that he stopped beside a tree and beat his head against it, again and again. His whole life, made up of idleness, silly antics and buffoonery, flashed suddenly before his mind's eye. He was now going to Golovlyovo, he knew what awaited him there and yet he was going, he could not help going there. There was no other way open to him. The humblest of men could do something for themselves, could earn their living—*only he could do nothing*. This thought seemed to have struck him for the first time. He had occasionally given thought to the future and imagined all sorts of possibilities, but he always pictured a life of idle comfort and never one of work. And now he was faced with retribution for the folly of his irretrievable past. A bitter retribution, expressed in one ominous phrase: "She will be the death of me!"

It was about ten in the morning when he caught sight of the white belfry of the Golovlyovo church beyond the forest.

Stepan Vladimirich turned pale, his hands began to tremble; he took off his cap and crossed himself. He recalled the parable of the prodigal son returning home, but he realised at once that he would only be deceiving himself by drawing any such comparisons. At last his eyes sought out a boundary post close to the road and he found

himself on the Golovlyov land, that unloved land that had given him life and nurtured him unloved, had let him out, unloved, into the world and was now receiving him back into its bosom, as unloved as ever. The sun stood high in the sky, scorching pitilessly the endless Golovlyovo fields. But he turned paler and paler and felt a feverish chill taking hold of him.

He reached the churchyard at last, and there his courage left him completely. His parental house, showing behind the trees, had such a peaceful look that one could not believe there was anything out of the ordinary happening there; but it had on him the effect of Medusa's head. He fancied he saw his coffin there. "Coffin! Coffin! Coffin!" he repeated unconsciously.

He did not venture to go straight to the house, but called first at the priest's and asked him to go and inform Arina Petrovna of his arrival, and to ask whether she would receive him.

The priest's wife was much concerned when she saw him and at once set to making an omelette for him; village boys crowded round him, gaping at the young master with surprise; peasants took off their caps as they passed him, glancing at him rather enigmatically; one old man, a house servant, actually ran up to him and kissed his hand. They all understood that the man before them was an unloved son who had come to his unloved home, that he had come for good and that the only way he would ever leave it would be feet foremost, to the churchyard. And all felt sorry for him and uneasy at the same time.

At last the priest returned and said that "his Mamma was ready to receive him". Ten minutes later he was *there*. Arina Petrovna met him with stern solemnity, measured him from head to foot with an icy stare, but did not indulge in any useless reproaches. She did not admit him into the house but saw him on the backdoor steps and gave orders that the young master should be taken by the other entrance to see his father. The old man lay dozing on his bed covered with a white blanket and wearing a white nightcap, everything about him was white, as though he were a corpse. He woke up when Stepan Vladimirich came in and broke into inane laughter:

"Aha, my boy, so you've been caught in the old witch's clutches!" he called out while his son kissed his hand. Then he crowed like a cock, laughed again, and repeated several times: "She'll eat you raw! She'll eat you raw!"

"She will," the son's inner being seemed to echo.

His forebodings came true. He had a room assigned to him in the little house where the estate office was. They brought him some underclothes of homespun linen and his father's old dressing-gown, which he put on at once. The doors of the sepulchral vault opened, let him in—and slammed to.

There followed a succession of dull, colourless days, swallowed up one after another in the grey, yawning abyss of time. Arina Petrovna refused to see him, and he was not admitted to his father. Three days after his arrival the bailiff, Finogei Ipatich, informed him of his mother's decree: he was to be clothed and fed and on top of that allowed a pound of Faller's tobacco a month. Stepan Vladimirovich heard his mother's decision and merely remarked:

"What a woman! She's nosed it out that Zhukov's tobacco is two rubles a pound and Faller's one ruble ninety kopeks—even on this she's pinching ten kopeks a month! I suppose she'll use it for almsgiving at my expense."

The symptoms of moral sobering he had shown while he walked to Golovlyovo along the country road now vanished; his frivolity reasserted itself, and with it came resignation to "Mamma's will". The vision of a hopeless, desperate future that had for a moment flashed before his mind filling him with terror grew more and more misty with every day until at last it disappeared altogether. The present, grim in its bareness, claimed him—claimed him so impudently and insistently that his whole being and all his thoughts were taken up with it. And what sense, indeed, could there be in any thoughts of the future when the whole course of his life had been irrevocably settled in its minutest details in Arina Petrovna's mind?

For days on end he paced his room, his pipe in his mouth, humming snatches of tunes where psalms alternated with bawdy songs. When the head clerk happened to be at the office Stepan Vladimirovich would come out to

him and would calculate what Arina Petrovna's income was.

"Whatever does she do with all this lot of money!" he exclaimed in surprise when he arrived at the figure of more than eighty thousand paper rubles. "I know she doesn't give my brothers overmuch; she herself lives stingily and feeds my father on salted meat. . . . She must be putting it in the bank, there's nothing else for it!"

Sometimes Finogei Ipatich himself came to the office bringing the peasants' rent, and the money that caused Stepan Vladimirovich such heart-ache was placed in bundles on the table.

"Just look at the pile!" he exclaimed. "And she'll stuff herself with it all! No chance of her sparing a bundle for her son—'Here, my son, you are in trouble, take this for your vodka and tobacco!'"

Then followed endless and extremely cynical conversations with Yakov, the head clerk, on ways to soften Arina Petrovna's heart and make her dote on him.

"I met a man in Moscow," Golovlyov related, "and he knew a magic word. When his mother refused to give him any money he just said that word, and she would at once start writhing in convulsions—her arms and legs and her whole body!"

"He cast a sort of evil spell on her, so to say," Yakov surmised.

"Well, you can call it what you like, but it's honest truth that there is such a magic word. And another man told me, you must take a live frog and put it into an ant-heap in the dead of night; by morning the ants will have picked it clean, and only one little bone will be left; take that bone—and, so long as you carry it in your pocket, you may ask whatever you like of any woman—she can refuse you nothing."

"Well, we can do that straight away if you like."

"Ah, brother, but the point is you must first lay a curse upon yourself! If it hadn't been for that, the old witch would have been doing a lively dance to my tune long ago."

They spent whole hours in such conversations, but they could not hit upon any magical remedy. One had either

to lay a curse upon oneself first or sell one's soul to the devil. So there was nothing for it but to accept "Mamma's will", improving upon it slightly by certain arbitrary requisitions from the estate officials. Stepan Vladimirovich laid a tribute on every single one of them in the form of tobacco, tea, and sugar. He was extremely badly fed. He was generally given the leavings of his mother's dinner; and as Arina Petrovna was moderate to the point of stinginess, there was little left over for him. He found it particularly tormenting because, since vodka had become a forbidden fruit for him he developed a voracious appetite. He was hungry from morning till night and thought of nothing but food. He watched for the time when Arina Petrovna was asleep, and would run to the kitchen and the servants' hall and search for food everywhere. Sometimes he would sit by the open window and wait for someone to drive past. If it happened to be one of the Golovlyovo peasants he would stop him and impose a tribute of an egg or a bun or something.

At their first meeting Arina Petrovna drew for him briefly but clearly the whole programme of his existence. "You may stay here for the present," she said, "there's a corner for you at the office, you shall have food from my table, but as for the rest you must excuse me, my dear! I never went in for dainty fare and I am not likely to begin now, for your sake. Your brothers will be here soon, they'll decide between them what's to be done about you, and I'll do what they suggest. I don't want to take a sin upon my conscience—as your brothers decide, so it shall be."

And now he was eagerly waiting for his brothers' arrival. But he little thought of the effect their arrival might have upon his future (he had evidently decided that it was no use thinking of it), and merely wondered whether his brother Pavel would bring some tobacco and how much.

"And maybe he'll stump up some money," he added in his mind. "Porphiry the blood-sucker won't give me any, not that one, but Pavel. . . . I'll say to him, 'Give something to an old soldier for vodka'—and he will. I'm sure he will."



Time went on but he did not notice its passage. He lived in absolute idleness but he hardly seemed to mind that. He only felt dull in the evenings because the head clerk went home at eight o'clock, and Arina Petrovna did not allow him any candles, saying that he could pace up and down his room just as well in the dark. But he soon grew accustomed to this, too, and indeed came to like the darkness because the flights of his imagination grew more daring in the dark and carried him far away from the hateful Golovlyovo. The only thing that troubled him was a strange sensation in his heart and the peculiar way it fluttered, especially when he went to bed. Sometimes he jumped out of bed, overwrought, and ran about the room clutching at his left side.

"Ah, if only I could drop down dead!" he thought. "Like hell I will! And yet perhaps. . . ."

But when one morning the head clerk informed him with an air of mystery that his brothers had arrived in the night, he was startled and changed colour. Something childish suddenly woke up in him, he wanted to run to the house to see what his brothers were wearing, whether they had the same sort of travelling-bags as a captain he knew had, and where they were going to sleep; he wanted to hear them talk to Mamma, to spy out what they would have for dinner. In short, he wanted once more to take part in the life that was so obstinately excluding him, to fall at his mother's feet and get her to forgive him, and then perhaps, in the joy of reconciliation, eat the fatted calf. The family was not up yet, but he had already been to the kitchen and found out from the cook what had been ordered for dinner—for the first course, a small pot of fresh cabbage soup and yesterday's broth warmed up, for the second—salted meat and four cutlets, for the third—roast lamb and four snipe, and for sweet, raspberry pie and cream.

"Yesterday's soup, salt meat, and mutton is for the out-cast," he said to the cook. "And I don't suppose they'll give me any pie, either."

"That will be as your mother pleases, sir."

"Ah, me! And there was a time when I used to eat snipe! I did! I even betted Lieutenant Gremykin once

that I would eat fifteen snipe at one go—and I did! Only after that I couldn't bear to look at them for a month."

"And now you wouldn't mind having some again?"

"She won't give me any! And yet why should she grudge it? Snipe is a free bird, one hasn't to feed it or to look after it—it lives at its own expense! Neither snipe nor mutton costs her anything, but there you are—the old witch knows that snipe is tastier than mutton, so she won't give me any! She'd rather see it rot than give it to me! And what is there for breakfast?"

"There's liver, mushrooms in sour cream, and cakes."

"You might at least send me some cake—try and do it, will you?"

"I'll try. I'll tell you what, sir: when your brothers sit down to breakfast, send the head clerk here, he'll bring you a couple of cakes on the sly."

Stepan Vladimirich spent the morning waiting for his brothers, but they did not come. At last, at about eleven o'clock, the head clerk brought the two promised cakes and reported that the gentlemen had just finished breakfast and were closeted with Arina Petrovna in her bedroom.

Arina Petrovna gave her sons a solemn reception. She was overwhelmed by sorrow. Two maids were supporting her by the arms; wisps of grey hair escaped from under her white bonnet, her head drooped and lolled from side to side, her legs seemed to be giving way under her. She liked to play before her children the part of a venerable and stricken mother, and on such occasions she dragged her feet with an effort and had two maids supporting her on either side. Styopka the blockhead used to call these solemn receptions "Bishop's Mass", his mother "A Lady Bishop", and the two maids "The Bishop's staff-bearers". But as it was past one o'clock in the morning she received them without a word. She gave the children her hand to kiss without speaking, she kissed and blessed them, and when Porphyry Vladimirich expressed his readiness to spend the rest of the night, if need be, chatting to his darling Mamma, she said, with a wave of her hand, "Go and

rest after your journey. This is no time for conversation, we'll talk tomorrow."

Next morning the two sons went to kiss their Papa's hand, but Papa did not give them his hand. He was lying in his bed with his eyes closed, and when his children came in he shouted:

"So you have come to judge the sinner? Get out, you pharisees! Get out!"

Nevertheless Porphiry Vladimirich came out of his father's study greatly moved and with tears in his eyes, while Pavel Vladimirich, like the "graven image that he was", merely picked his nose.

"He is in a bad way, Mamma darling! In a very bad way!" Porphiry Vladimirich exclaimed, throwing himself on his mother's breast.

"Why, is he very weak today?"

"So weak, so weak, one can see he's not long for this world!"

"Oh, he'll drag on a bit yet!"

"No, dear Mamma, no! I know that there has never been much joy in your life, but when I think of all these blows falling upon you at once, really it's a wonder you have the strength to endure these trials!"

"Well, my dear, one has to endure them if such is God's will. You know what it says in the Bible, 'Bear ye one another's burdens'—and He, our Father, has chosen me to bear my family's burdens!"

Arina Petrovna even closed her eyes; the goodness of it—every one of them living off her, with plenty of everything provided for them, while she alone knew no rest from morning to night, bearing their burdens for them.

"Yes, my dear," she said after a moment's pause, "it's not easy for me in my old age! I have done my bit and provided for my children; it's time I had a rest. Four thousand serfs is no joke, you know. Fancy managing such a huge property at my age! You've got to keep an eye on everyone, to be always on the watch, always on the run! Take these bailiffs and stewards of ours now: they may stand before you, cap in hand, but never you mind—they keep one eye on you and the other on the main chance! You can't trust them. Well, and what about you," she

broke off suddenly, turning to Pavel. "Picking your nose?"

"What's it to me?" Pavel Vladimirich snapped, interrupted in his engrossing occupation.

"What's it to you, indeed? Why, he is your father after all, you might feel sorry for him!"

"What if he is? What's new about him . . . he's just the same. He's been like that for ten years. You are always down on me!"

"Why should I be down on you, my dear? I am your mother! Look at Porphiry now—he is sorry for me, and shows his affection as a good son should. But you won't even look at your mother properly, you keep scowling as though I weren't your mother but your enemy! Mind you don't bite me!"

"But what have I done?"

"Wait! Keep quiet a minute, let your mother have a word! Do you remember what the commandment says: 'Honour thy father and thy mother—that it may be well with thee. . . .' You evidently don't want it to be well with you?"

Pavel Vladimirich looked at his mother in bewilderment and said nothing.

"You see, you've nothing to say!" Arina Petrovna went on, "so you know yourself your conscience isn't clear. Well, we won't go into that now. In honour of the occasion we'll pass it over. God sees everything, my dear, and I . . . I've seen through you for years and years! Ah, my children, my children! You will think of your mother when she is lying in her grave—but it will be too late then."

"Mamma!" Porphiry Vladimirich interposed, "please give up those black thoughts!"

"We shall all have to die, my dear," Arina Petrovna pronounced sententiously; "these aren't black thoughts at all, but truly pious ones! My health is failing, my children, failing fast! Nothing of my old self is left—I am all weak and ailing. Those wretched maids of mine have noticed it too and don't care a fig for what I say! You should hear the way they answer me back! The only threat that still scares them is that I'll complain to the young masters; that shuts them up sometimes."

Tea was served, then breakfast, and all the time Arina

Petrovna kept complaining and pitying herself. After breakfast she invited her sons to her bedroom.

As soon as the door was locked she at once broached the subject which was the reason for the convocation of the family council.

"The blockhead has turned up, you know!" she began.

"So we have heard, Mamma," Porphiry Vladimirich responded with what sounded like irony, but might have been merely the complacency of a man who has just had a good meal.

"He arrived quite pleased with himself as though he had done the right thing. He might have been saying to himself: 'No matter how I've gadded about and played the fool these years, my old mother will always take me in!' How he hated me all these years! What I have suffered from his nasty tricks and his buffoonery! What trouble I went to at the time to get him into the civil service—and it's all like water off a duck's back! I struggled and struggled and at last I thought to myself: good heavens, if he doesn't want to look after himself, surely I can't be expected to wear myself out to a frazzle for the sake of that great big blockhead! I'll chuck him a cut, I thought; perhaps if he has some money of his own he'll sober down a bit! So I did. I found a house for him, I paid twelve thousand silver rubles for it with my own hands! And what happened? In less than three years he's come to sponge on me again! It's an outrage! How much longer must I stand it?"

Porphiry raised his eyes to the ceiling and sadly shook his head as though to say, "Oh, dear, dear! Fancy worrying our darling Mamma so much! Why couldn't everyone behave nicely and live in peace and quiet, then nothing of this would have happened and Mamma would not have been angry. . . . Oh, dear, dear!" But Arina Petrovna, who was not the sort of woman to brook any interruption in the flow of her thoughts, took exception to Porphiry's movement.

"Don't you start wagging your head!" she said. "You listen to me first! How do you suppose I felt when I heard that he let his mother's blessing go to the dogs like a bone with no more meat on it? There I'd been going without

food and sleep for his sake, and he went and did a thing like that! Just as though he had bought a penny toy at the market, and when he grew tired of it just chucked it out of the window! His mother's blessing—think of it!"

"Oh, Mamma, it was such a dreadful thing to do..." Porphiry Vladimirovich began, but Arina Petrovna stopped him again.

"Stop! Wait! You can speak your mind when I tell you to! And if only he had warned me, the scoundrel! If he had said, 'I am sorry, Mamma, this is how it happened . . . I couldn't withhold myself'—had I known in time, I could have bought the house for next to nothing myself! If an undeserving son could not make good use of it, let the deserving children have it! After all, that house brings in 15 per cent a year easily. Had he warned me I might have chucked him another thousand rubles out of charity! But not a bit of it—here I was, with no shadow of suspicion in my mind, and he had already disposed of it all. Twelve thousand rubles I paid for the house with my own hands, and he let it go for eight thousand by auction!"

"And the worst of it is, Mamma, that he dealt so despicably with his mother's blessing!" Porphiry Vladimirovich interposed hastily, as though afraid that his mother would interrupt him again.

"There's that too, my dear. Besides, I didn't come by my money easily; it wasn't by quips and cranks but by the sweat of my brow that I built up my fortune. How do you suppose I grew rich? When I married your Papa, all he had was Golovlyovo with a hundred and one serfs and a few outlying hamlets with twenty serfs in one place and thirty in another—some hundred and fifty souls all told, and, as to me, I had nothing to speak of, and see what I've built with that miserable start! Four thousand serfs—there's no hiding it! Even if I wished to take my wealth into the grave with me, it couldn't be done. Well, what do you suppose? Was it easy for me to come by those four thousand souls? No, my dear friend, it was so hard, so hard that at times I could not sleep at night for thinking how to go about a business so cleverly that nobody should get wind of it till the moment came. And I always

had to watch that no one cut me out, and that I shouldn't be spending a kopek too much! What haven't I been through! Cold and sleet and ice and spring floods—I had a taste of it all. It's only of late that I have allowed myself the luxury of a coach, but in the early days they would just bring a peasant cart for me, fix a top of sorts on to it, harness a pair of horses, and off I'd go, trit-trot to Moscow! And as I jolted along I kept worrying: what if somebody else snatched the bargain from under my nose! When I got to Moscow I'd put up at an inn in Rogozhskaya, in dirt and stench—I have been through it all, my dears. I wouldn't waste ten kopeks on a cab so I trudged all the way on foot from Rogozhskaya to Solyan-ka! Even the yardsmen wondered at me. 'You are young, lady,' they said, 'and you have means, and yet you tax yourself so!' But I bore it all in silence. And all the money I had on that first occasion was thirty thousand paper rubles. I had sold your Papa's remote hamlets, about a hundred souls all in all—and with that sum I set out to buy a thousand souls. Can you believe it! I had a service sung at the Iversky shrine and went along to try my luck. And you know what? It was as though Our Lady had seen my bitter tears: she allowed me to buy the estate! It was like a miracle—as soon as I offered thirty thousand, above the crown mortgage, it was as if I had cut short the auction! They had been wrangling and shouting before, but now they all left off bidding—it was so very, very quiet. The auctioneer got up and congratulated me but I couldn't understand a word he said! Ivan Nikolaich, the attorney, was there. He came up to me and said, 'Congratulations on your purchase, Madam!' and I simply stood like one struck dumb! And to think of the Lord's mercy—if someone had seen my distracted state and shouted just out of mischief, 'Thirty-five thousand,' I might easily have bidden forty in my madness! And where could I have got it?"

Arina Petrovna had more than once told her children the story of her first steps along the path of acquisition, but it evidently had not yet lost for them the charm of novelty. Porphiry listened to his mother, smiling, sighing, looking up to heaven or casting his eyes down, according

to the nature of the incidents she was relating. Pavel opened his eyes wide like a child who is being told a familiar story of which he can never tire.

"You're probably thinking your mother's fortune cost her nothing!" Arina Petrovna continued. "No, my dears, you can't even have a pimple on your nose for nothing. After my first purchase I was laid up with fever for six weeks! You can judge for yourselves now what it means to me, after all the torments I've been through, to see my hard-earned money flung on the rubbish heap!"

There was a minute's silence. Porphyry was ready to rend his garments in anguish, but feared that in the country there might be no one to mend them, Pavel lost interest as soon as the "fairy-tale" was over, and his face assumed its former expression of apathy.

"So this is what I have called you for," Arina Petrovna began again; "to judge between me and him, that wretch! Whatever you decide will be right. If you find him guilty, guilty he is; if you find me guilty, guilty I am. But I am not going to let that villain get the better of me!" she added quite unexpectedly.

Porphyry Vladimirovich felt that his chance had come and gave full rein to his eloquence. But like the true "blood-sucker" he was, he did not come straight to the point but began in a roundabout way.

"If you will allow me, Mamma darling, to express my opinion," he said, "here it is in two words: children must obey their parents, must follow their guidance without question and cherish them in their old age—that's all. What are children, Mamma dear? Children are loving creatures that belong entirely to their parents—from their very selves to the last rag they have on. Parents may therefore judge their children, but the children their parents—never! The children's duty is to revere and not to judge. You say, 'Judge between him and me.' That is generous of you, dear Mamma, it's magnificent. But can we even think of such a thing and not be awed—we, upon whom you have showered blessings from the very day we were born? Say what you like it would be blasphemy for us to judge you! It would be such blasphemy, such blasphemy...."

"Stop! Wait a minute! If you say you must not judge me, then acquit me and condemn him!" Arina Petrovna interrupted. She had listened attentively, but could not make out what trickery was brewing in the "blood-sucker's" head.

"No, Mamma dear, I can't do that either! Or, rather, I daren't do it and have no right to: I cannot judge you at all—can neither condemn nor acquit. You are our mother; you alone know what action to take with us, your children. If we have deserved it—you will reward us, if we have erred—you will punish us. Our duty is to obey and not to criticise. Even if in your parental anger you happened to overstep the measure of justice, we daren't repine, for the ways of Providence are hidden from us. Who knows? Perhaps that is as it should be! It's the same in this case: our brother Stepan has acted ungratefully, I should even say dishonourably, but you alone are capable of determining the degree of punishment he deserves for his misdeeds!"

"So you refuse, do you? Settle your troubles as best you can, Mamma dear, you say?"

"Oh, Mamma, Mamma! how can you say it? Oh my, oh my! What I said was: let Stepan's fate be what it pleases you to decide; and you . . . ah, what black thoughts you suspect in me!"

"Well, and what do *you* say?" Arina Petrovna turned to Pavel.

"What's it to me! You won't listen to me, anyway," Pavel began as though half-awake, but suddenly he took courage and went on: "Of course he is guilty . . . tear him to pieces, pound him in a mortar . . . it's an old story. . . . What's it to me?"

After muttering these incoherent words he paused, staring at his mother open-mouthed as though unable to believe that he really had said them.

"Well, my dear, I'll attend to you later," Arina Petrovna interrupted him coldly. "I see you want to follow in Styopka's footsteps. . . . Mind you don't make a mistake, my friend. You may live to regret it—but it will be too late!"

"Why me? I haven't said anything! . . . I said, do what

you like! What is there . . . disrespectful in this?" Pavel capitulated.

"Later, my dear, I'll talk to you later! You imagine that because you are an officer there's no way of bringing you to heel? But there is, my boy, don't you worry! In other words, you both refuse to judge between us?"

"I, dear Mamma. . . ."

"And I too. What's it to me! For all I care you can cut him to pieces. . . ."

"Be quiet, for Christ's sake, you . . . you're a bad son!" (Arina Petrovna knew that he quite deserved being called "a scoundrel", but she refrained in honour of the occasion.) "Well, if you refuse, I shall have to use my own judgement. And this is my decision: I'll try kindness on him once more. I shall give him Papa's bit of property in Vologda Gubernia; I'll have a small cottage built for him and let him live there, getting his keep from the peasants."

Although Porphyry Vladimirich had refused to sit in judgement over his brother, he was so struck by his mother's generosity that he felt it his duty to point out to her the dangerous consequences to which the proposed measure might lead.

"Mamma!" he exclaimed, "you are more than generous! You are faced with a misdeed . . . the vilest, most despicable misdeed . . . and suddenly everything is forgiven and forgotten! It's magnificent! But forgive me . . . I am afraid for you, my dear! Think what you will of me, but if I were you . . . I wouldn't do it!"

"And why not?"

"I don't know. . . . Perhaps there's none of that generosity in me . . . none of that motherly feeling, so to speak. But I keep wondering: what if my brother Stepan with his natural depravity treats your second gift the same way as he did the first?"

It turned out, however, that this consideration had already occurred to Arina Petrovna, but at the same time she had another thought, secreted in her mind, which she now had to put into words:

"The Vologda estate is part of your father's family property, you know," she said through her teeth; "anyway,



sooner or later we should have to give him a share of that."

"I understand that, dearest Mamma. . . ."

"And if you understand it, you must understand too that after giving him the Vologda village we can make him sign a statement that he has received his share of his father's property and is satisfied fully?"

"I understand that too, Mamma darling. You made a great mistake that time through the kindness of your heart! You ought to have done it when you bought the house for him—that was the time to make him sign away his claims on Papa's property!"

"There's nothing for it, I didn't think of that."

"In his delight he would have signed anything you liked! And you, in your kindness. . . . Oh, what a mistake it was! What a mistake! What a mistake!"

"What's the good of your cackling now! You should have done your cackling at the time. You want to pile all the blame on your mother now, but when it comes to settling matters you wash your hands of the whole thing! That isn't the point though: I dare say I can get his signature out of him now just as easily. I don't suppose your Papa will die just as yet, and meanwhile the blockhead must eat and drink. If he refuses to sign the statement we can always turn him out—let him wait for Papa's death! But I still want to know, why do you disapprove of my giving him the Vologda property?"

"He'll squander it, Mamma! He let his house go for debts, and he'll do the same with the village!"

"If he does he will have only himself to blame!"

"He will come to you again, you know."

"Not on your life! I won't let him in! I won't give him a crust of bread or a drop of water, the hateful dolt! People wouldn't blame me for it, and God wouldn't punish me. Why, squandering a house, and then an estate . . . am I his serf that I should scrape and save for him alone all my life? I have other children, too!"

"But, all the same, he would come to you. He is a brazen chap, you know, Mamma darling!"

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"I tell you, I won't let him in at the door! Stop your prattle. 'He'll come, he'll come!' I won't let him in!"

Arina Petrovna paused and sat staring at the window. She herself suspected that the Vologda property meant only a temporary release from the "hateful one", that sooner or later he would be sure to squander it and come to her again, and that being his mother she could not refuse him a home; but the thought that her enemy would remain with her for ever, that even shut up in the office he would still perpetually haunt her imagination, was so oppressive that she could not help shuddering at it.

"Never!" she cried out at last, banging her fist on the table and jumping up from her chair.

Porphiry Vladimirich gazed at his dear friend Mamma, and nodded his head dolefully.

"But, Mamma, you are angry!" he said at last in a voice so sweet it was almost a purr.

"You'd have me cutting a caper with joy, I suppose?"

"Oh, Mamma! And what does it say in the Gospel about patience? Possess your soul in patience, it says! In patience—that's what it says! Do you suppose God doesn't see it all? He sees everything, Mamma dearest! We may sit here suspecting nothing, planning this and that, while He up there has made up His mind already and said, 'Let me send her a trial.' A-a-ah! And I thought you were a good girl, Mamma!"

But Arina Petrovna understood very well that the "blood-sucker" was merely setting a snare for her, and grew angrier than ever.

"Are you trying to make fun of me?" she shouted at him. "Your mother is talking to you seriously and you're clowning! Don't try babbling your way out of it! Speak up, what's on your mind? Do you want to leave him at Golovlyovo and saddle me with him for ever?"

"Exactly, Mamma, if you graciously consent. Leave him as he is and make him sign away his claim."

"Yes . . . I see. . . I knew you would suggest it. Very well then. Suppose I do what you say. Hard as it is for me to have the hateful creature always about me—yet there's no one, it seems, to take pity on me. I bore my cross when I was young, and now that I am old it wouldn't do

for me to try and shirk it. Supposing I let him stay. Let us talk of something else now. So long as your Papa and I are alive he will live in Golovlyovo; he won't starve. But when we are gone?"

"Mamma darling! Why such black thoughts?"

"Black or white, one must think of it. We aren't young. When we both croak, what will become of him?"

"Mamma! Can it be that you have no trust in us, your children! Are those the rules in which you brought us up?"

And Porphiry Vladimirich cast at her one of those enigmatic glances of his that always made her uneasy.

"It's a trap!" said a voice in her heart.

"Why, Mamma, I would be all the more happy to help a poor man! A rich one doesn't need anything, bless him. He has enough as it is. But a poor man—do you know what Christ said about the poor?"

Porphyry Vladimirich got up and kissed his mother's hand.

"Mamma, allow me to give my brother two pounds of tobacco!" he said.

Arina Petrovna made no answer. She was looking at him and thinking: is he really so vile that he could turn his own brother out into the street?

"Well, let it be your way! If he is to live at Golovlyovo, so be it!" she said at last. "You have caught me in your net, good and proper. You began by saying, 'Do as you please, Mamma,' and in the end you got me dancing to your tune. But listen to me now! He hates me, he's been nothing but a bane and a disgrace to me all his life, and he has ended by trampling on his mother's blessing—but all the same, if ever you turn him out or force him to go begging, I shall never forgive you! I shan't! Go to him now, both of you. I expect he's strained his eyes ready to pop, looking out for you."

Her sons left the room; Arina Petrovna went to the window and watched them walk across the courtyard, not speaking a word to each other. Porphiry kept taking off his cap and crossing himself—at the church, showing white in the distance, at the wayside chapel, and at the post with the tin cup for alms attached to it. Pavel was evidently

unable to tear his eyes away from his new boots, the tips of which shone like mirrors in the sun.

"For whom have I been scraping and saving it all, going without food and sleep? For whom?" a wail broke from her heart.

The brothers went away; the house grew quiet once more. Arina Petrovna resumed her interrupted work of management with redoubled energy; fewer sounds came from the kitchen now, and instead there was increased activity in the office, in the granaries, store-rooms, cellars, etc. Summer the Harvester was drawing to an end; they were jam-making, pickling, salting; winter supplies were arriving from everywhere; cart-loads of the women's tax in kind were being brought in from all the villages: dried mushrooms, berries, eggs, vegetables, etc. All this was measured, received, and added to the stores of former years. No wonder the mistress of Golovlyovo had to have a whole row of cellars, store-rooms, and granaries built; they were all crammed full, and quite a lot of the provisions had gone bad so that one could not go near them for the putrid smell. All the stores were sorted at the end of the summer, and the ones that looked doubtful were sent to the servants' kitchen.

"Those cucumbers are quite good, they are only a bit slimy at the top and smell a little; the servants may as well have a treat!" Arina Petrovna would say, giving orders to put aside this or that barrel.

Stepan Vladimirovich had taken to his new life remarkably well. At times he had a desperate urge "to get drunk as a fiddler", and generally, "to let himself go" (he actually had the money to do so, as we shall see later), but he denied himself manfully, as though calculating that the "right moment" had not yet come. He was busy every minute now, for he took the most fussy and lively interest in the laying in of stores, disinterestedly rejoicing or grieving at every achievement or setback in his mother's hoarding activities. In a fever of excitement he made his way from the office to the cellars, hatless and wearing only his dressing-gown, hiding from his mother behind trees and various outhouses that cluttered the courtyard. (Arina Petrovna

had seen him more than once, all the same, and she seethed with a righteous urge to give "the blockhead" a good scolding, but on second thought she decided to ignore him.) With feverish impatience he watched carts being unloaded, jars, barrels, and tubs brought from the store-houses, all this being sorted out and finally swallowed in the yawning abyss of the cellars and store-rooms. As a rule he was satisfied.

"They brought two cart-loads of mushrooms from Dubrovino today—you never saw such mushrooms!" he told the head clerk delightedly. "Why, we were afraid we'd have to do without this winter! We have to thank the Dubrovino people for this! Well done, Dubrovino! They've got us out of a scrape!"

Or:

"Mother sent them to catch carp in the pond today—my, what splendid fish! Some are more than a foot long! I expect we shall be living on carp all this week."

Sometimes, however, he was grieved:

"The cucumbers are no good this year! They are rough and spotty! Not a single decent cucumber, and that's that! I suppose we shall be eating last year's, and this year's will be given to the servants—that's all they're good for."

But on the whole he disapproved of Arina Petrovna's system of housekeeping.

"What a lot of stuff she lets rot, you know, it's a shame! They took no end of things out of the store-rooms today: salt meat, fish, cucumbers—she had it all sent to the servants' kitchen! Where's the sense in that? Is that the way to manage things? There's tons of fresh food, but she won't touch it till all the old rotten stuff has been eaten!"

Arina Petrovna's confidence that there would be no difficulty in making Styopka the blockhead sign any document at all was fully justified. Far from objecting to putting his signature on all the papers sent him by his mother, he even boasted to the head clerk in the evening:

"I've spent the whole day signing papers, old chap—resigning my claims to the estate! I am cleaned out now. I haven't a penny to bless myself with and am not likely to have in the future. I've put the old woman's mind at rest."

He had parted with his brothers amicably and was de-

lighted that he now had a whole lot of tobacco stored up. Of course he could not resist calling Porphiry "blood-sucker" and "Judas", but these epithets went by unnoticed in a veritable flood of chatter in which one could not trace a single consecutive thought. In a surge of generous feeling his brothers went so far as to give him some money, Porphiry accompanying his gift with the words:

"Now supposing you want a little drop of oil for the icon light, or a candle to burn for the Lord—the money is there, ready to hand! Well then, brother! Live quietly and peaceably and Mamma will be pleased with you, and you will be comfortable, and we shall all rejoice and be happy. Mother has a kind heart, you know, my friend!"

"She may be kind-hearted all right," Stepan Vladimirich assented, "but she feeds me on rotten meat!"

"And whose fault is that? Who trampled on his mother's blessing? It's your own fault, you squandered your property! And what a lovely bit of property it was—a profitable, a splendid, a wonderful bit of property! If you had lived quietly and modestly, you would be eating nice roast beef now and delicious veal, and you could have some sauce with it too, if you were so minded. And you would have had plenty of everything—potatoes, and cabbage and tender little peas.... Isn't it so, brother?"

Had Arina Petrovna heard this speech she could not have refrained from saying, "Off he goes babbling again, the magpie." But luckily for Styopka the blockhead his sense of hearing did not register other people's words. Judas could talk as much as he liked and be quite certain that not a single word of his would reach its destination.

In short, Stepan Vladimirich parted with his brothers in a friendly way, and with some complacency showed Yakov the head clerk the two twenty-five-ruble notes that he had found in his hand after saying good-bye to them.

"That will last me a long time, old man," he said. "We have tobacco, we are well provided with tea and sugar, vodka is the only thing we lack—but we can have vodka too if we feel like it! But I'll wait just yet—I haven't time, I must run to the cellar. If I don't keep an eye on them they'll pilfer it all in no time! And you know, brother, the old witch did see me as I crept along the kitchen

wall one day! She was standing at the window, and I expect she thought as she looked at me, 'I thought someone was pinching my cucumbers—so that's what it is!'"

October came at last; it poured with rain; the road was impassable with black mud. Stepan Vladimirich could not go out of doors because all he had on his feet were his father's old slippers, and on his shoulders, his father's shabby dressing-gown. He sat in his room all day gazing through the double panes of the window at the row of peasant huts sunk in mud. Men, who had worked hard all through the summer months, were busily flitting to and fro like black dots in the grey autumn fog. They had had no respite from their hard work and only the background was different now: the joyous brilliance of the summer was replaced by continual autumn twilight. The corn-kilns went on smoking well past midnight; the knocking of flails resounded monotonously throughout the neighbourhood. In the Golovlyovo barns they were threshing also, and there was talk in the office that they could hardly finish the tremendous amount of work there was before St. Martin's Lent. Everything looked despondent and sleepy, everything weighed on the spirit. The office doors were no longer wide open, as in the summer, and inside the rooms a bluish steam rose from the wet sheepskins.

It is hard to say what impression was produced on Stepan Vladimirich's mind by the picture of the busy autumn in the country, or indeed whether he grasped that in the squelching mud under a constant downpour of rain people were working as hard as they had done in the summer; but there is no doubt that the grey tearful autumn sky depressed him. It seemed to be hanging just overhead, threatening to drown him in the yawning gulfs of mud. There was nothing for him to do except to sit at the window and watch the heavy masses of clouds. In the morning, as soon as it was light, he could see them thronging the horizon. The clouds stood motionless, as though spellbound: an hour, two hours, three hours passed and they were still in the same place, without the slightest change in their shape or colour. That cloud over there, the one lower and darker than the others (looking like a cassocked priest with outstretched arms), standing out clearly against the whitish

mass of the clouds above it, had the same sprawling shape at midday as in the early morning. True, the right arm had grown a little shorter, while the left stretched out hideously, pouring down rain at such a rate that a dark, almost black streak showed against the already dark background of the sky. There was that other cloud further off. In the morning it had hung like a huge shaggy mass over the Naglovka village, threatening to strangle it, it seemed,—and at midday, too, it was hanging in the same shape in the same spot, stretching down its paws as though ready to pounce. Clouds, clouds, and clouds—all day long. About five in the afternoon there came a change; the surrounding country would grow more and more obscure, and finally disappear altogether. The clouds were the first to go, and the sky would be wrapped in a uniform veil of blackness; then the forest and Naglovka vanished, then the church, the chapel, the nearest village and the orchard were swallowed by the darkness and only the eye that closely followed these mysterious disappearances could still descry the Golovlyovo house that stood at a distance of less than a hundred yards. It was quite dark indoors; no lights were yet lit in the office, and there was nothing for it but to walk up and down the room, up and down, up and down, endlessly. A sickly languor lay heavy on Stepan's mind; in spite of his idleness his whole body felt unreasonably, unendurably tired; one fretting, gnawing thought alone obsessed him; that thought was—"This is my grave, my grave, my grave!" Those black dots which had flitted about the village threshing-yards all day against a dark background of mud were not obsessed by that thought; they would not perish from this oppressive languor and dejection: even if not actually waging war against heaven, they were at any rate struggling, planning, defending, contriving something. Stepan Vladimirich never stopped to think if whatever they wore themselves out for, labouring day and night, was worth struggling for and defending, but he was conscious that those nameless dots were infinitely superior to him because he could not even struggle, because he had nothing to defend and to plan.

He spent his evenings at the office because Arina Petrovna still refused to allow him any candles. He sent her

several requests through the bailiff for top-boots and a sheepskin coat; but the answer was that there were no leather boots to spare for him and that when the frosts came he would receive a pair of felt snow-boots. Arina Petrovna evidently intended to carry out her plan to the letter and do no more than keep him from starving. At first he railed against his mother, but afterwards he seemed to forget about her; at first he recalled this and that, but then he even gave up recollecting. The very light of the candles at the office grew irksome to him and he shut himself up in his room to be alone with the darkness. He had only one resource left him now—a resource he still dreaded, but one that attracted him irresistibly. That resource was—to get drunk and forget. To forget completely and irretrievably, to sink into the gulf of oblivion so deeply that he could never rise to the surface again. Everything was driving him to this: the disorderly habits of his past, his enforced idleness of the present, and his sick body racked by his choking cough, tormented by unendurable attacks of sudden breathlessness and the continually increasing pains in his heart. At last he succumbed.

“You must procure me a bottle of vodka tonight, old chap,” he said one day to the head clerk in a voice that boded no good.

The first bottle was followed by a succession of others—and from that time onwards he unfailingly got drunk every night. At nine o’clock, when the lights were put out in the office and men went home to their lairs, he put on the table a bottle of vodka and a slice of black bread thickly sprinkled with salt. He did not attack the vodka at once but rather crept up on it. Everything around him was dead asleep; only mice scratched behind the wall-paper that had come unstuck, and the clock in the office ticked away insistently. Taking off his dressing-gown, with nothing on but his shirt, he scurried up and down the heated room; sometimes he stopped, came up to the table, felt for the bottle in the dark, and then resumed his pacing. He drank the first glasses making traditional drinkers’ jokes and voluptuously sipping the burning liquid; but gradually his heart began to beat faster, the blood rushed

to his head and his tongue began to mutter something quite incoherent. His dulled mind struggled to create images, his deadened memory strove to break through into the realm of the past; but the images were senseless and disconnected, and the past did not respond with a single recollection, sweet or bitter, as though a thick wall had risen once and for all between that which had been and which was now. All there was before him was the present in the form of a tightly locked prison in which the idea of space and of time disappeared without a trace. The room, the stove, three windows, a creaky wooden bed with a thin hard mattress on it, the table with the bottle of vodka—this was the horizon beyond which his mind could not reach. But as the contents of the bottle diminished and as the blood pounded stronger and stronger in his head, even this limited awareness of the present became too much for him. His muttering, which at first had some semblance of human speech, grew utterly meaningless; the pupils of his eyes dilated enormously, straining to make out the outlines of the darkness that filled the room; at last the darkness itself disappeared and was replaced by space filled with phosphorescent brilliance. It was a dead, endless void, sinister and luminous, without a single sound of life. It followed at his heels, tracking every step he took. There were no walls, no windows—nothing but the boundless, luminous void. He felt frightened; he had to stifle all sense of reality so completely that even this void should cease to exist. A few more efforts and he would attain his purpose. His stumbling legs carried his benumbed body to and fro, his muttering was now a wheeze; existence itself seemed to cease. He was in that strange torpid state when all signs of conscious life are absent and yet another, a peculiar kind of life, following its own course, is undoubtedly going on. Groan after groan broke forth from his breast without in the least disturbing his sleep; the disease carried on its work of destruction without causing, apparently, any physical pain.

He woke up when it was light; anguish, disgust, and hatred woke up together with him. It was an inert, unreasoning hatred—hatred of something vague and formless. His inflamed eyes dwelt senselessly first on one ob-

ject, then on another, gazing at it long and fixedly; his arms and legs trembled; his heart seemed to sink and fall, and then begin to hammer so violently that his hand instinctively clutched at his chest. He had not a single thought, not a single desire. His eyes fell on the stove, and his mind was so occupied with taking it in that it was impervious to any other impression. Then the window replaced the stove; the window, window, window. . . . He wanted nothing, nothing at all. He filled his pipe and lit it mechanically and it slipped from his fingers before he had finished smoking it; his tongue was muttering something, but evidently just from habit. The best thing was to sit still and stare at one point without speaking. It would be good to have a drop of vodka at such a moment to warm his blood—enough to make him feel alive if only for a short time; but in the day-time he could not procure vodka for love or money. He had to wait for nightfall to live once more those blissful moments when the ground slipped from under his feet, and instead of the hated walls of his room a boundless luminous void opened before his eyes.

Arina Petrovna had not the faintest idea of how the blockhead was spending his time. The sudden glimpse of feeling that flashed for a moment in her conversation with Porphyry died so quickly that she did not even notice it. As far as she was concerned, she was not following a deliberate policy; she had simply forgotten Stepan's existence. She had lost all sight of the fact that close by her, in the office, lived a being related to her by blood, a being who was perhaps pining away in his longing for life. Once she had adopted a certain way of living she followed it almost mechanically, and she believed that other people ought to do the same. It never occurred to her that the way of filling one's life varied according to a number of circumstances over which one had no control, and that while some people (including herself) loved the particular way in which they had chosen to fill their life, others had it forced upon them and hated it. And so, although the bailiff reported to her more than once that Stepan Vladimich was "in a bad way", she turned a deaf ear to his words and they made no impression upon her mind. At most she gave him a stereotyped answer:

"Never you fear, he'll get over it and outlive us both! What can ail a great big horse like him? Coughs, does he! Why, some men cough for thirty years on end and it's like water off a duck's back!"

But when she was informed one morning that during the night Stepan Vladimirich had disappeared from Golovlyovo, she suddenly came to her senses. She instantly sent the whole household in search of him and personally conducted the inquiry, beginning with an examination of the room in which the outcast lived. The first thing that struck her was the bottle on the table with a little vodka still left in it; in the excitement they had not thought of hiding it.

"What's this?" she asked, as though not understanding.

"I expect he . . . amused himself!" the bailiff answered with some hesitation.

"Who got it for him?" she began, but on second thought she kept her anger in check and went on with her examination.

The room was so dusty, grimy and filthy that even Arina Petrovna, who did not believe in comfort, felt uneasy. The ceiling was black, the wallpaper had cracked and hung in tatters in many places, the window-sills were dark under a thick layer of ashes, the pillows lay on the slimy floor, a crumpled sheet, smeared with filth, lay on the bed. The winter frame in one of the windows had been wrenched out and the window was half open: the outcast had evidently made his escape that way. Arina Petrovna instinctively glanced out of the window and was more frightened than ever. It was the beginning of November but the autumn was mild that year and there had been no frost yet. The fields and the roads were wet, black, and impassable. How could he have walked over them? Where had he gone? And at once she recalled that he had only a dressing-gown on and slippers, one of which had been found by the window, and that, as ill luck would have it, it had never stopped raining all night.

"It's a long time since I've paid you a visit, good people!" she said, sniffing the air that smelt of a horrible mixture of cheap vodka, coarse tobacco, and wet sheepskins.

All that day, while the men were searching the forest, she stood by the window peering into the desolate distance with vapid attention. All this fuss over "the blockhead"! It seemed to her like an absurd dream. She had said at the time that he ought to be sent to the Vologda estate—but no, that cursed Porphiry had wheedled her into leaving him at Golovlyovo—and look at the mess now! He could have lived there as he liked out of her sight, and that would be that! She would have done her duty: he squandered one piece of property, she chucked him another! And if he squandered the second, so much the worse for him, that's all! God Himself couldn't fill a bottomless pit! All would have been peace and quiet, and now—just think of the trick he's played! They could go whistling for him in the forest! It would be a good thing if they brought him home alive—a drunken man would not think twice before putting his head through a noose! He'd take a rope, catch it on a branch, twist it round his neck—and that would be the end of him! His mother had gone without food and sleep for his sake, and he, if you please, could think of nothing better than going and hanging himself. It would be different if he were badly off, if he'd been starved or driven to work—but he just slouched up and down his room all day like one crazy, with nothing to do but eat and drink, eat and drink! Another man couldn't have thanked his mother enough, but this one had the bright idea to hang himself—very nice and considerate of you, my loving son!

Arina Petrovna's surmises about the blockhead's violent death were not justified, however. Towards evening a covered cart, drawn by a pair of peasant horses, came into sight; it brought the fugitive to the office. He was half-insensible, covered with cuts and bruises, and his face was blue and swollen. It appeared that in the night he had walked as far as Dubrovino, a distance of some thirteen miles from Golovlyovo.

He slept for the next twenty-four hours. When he woke up he began pacing up and down the room as usual, but he did not touch his pipe, as if he had forgotten about it, and did not utter a sound in answer to all the questions put to him. Arina Petrovna was so upset that she almost

had him moved from the office to the house, but then, her composure restored, she decided to leave him where he was and merely gave orders that his room should be swept and scrubbed, his bed linen changed, curtains hung on the windows, etc. The following evening, when she was told that Stepan Vladimirovich had woken up, she sent for him to come to tea and actually managed to put some tenderness into her voice when she spoke to him.

"Why ever did you go running away from your mother like that?" she began. "Do you know how much anxiety you caused your mother? It's a good thing your Papa knew nothing of it—how would he have taken it in his condition?"

But Stepan Vladimirovich seemed indifferent to his mother's kindness, and stared with fixed, glassy eyes at the tallow candle as though watching the deposit of grease form gradually round the wick.

"Ah, you silly, silly boy!" Arina Petrovna went on more kindly still. "You might at least have thought how people would talk of your mother because of you! Your mother has no end of ill-wishers and goodness only knows what lies they'll make up! They'll say I didn't feed or clothe you . . . ah, you silly boy!"

There was the same silence and the same fixed, senseless stare.

"What was it you didn't like at your mother's? You have clothes to your back, and plenty to eat. You are warm and comfortable. . . . What else can you want? It is dull for you, but you can bear me no grudge for this, my dear—that's country life, you know! We have no balls and entertainments here—we all sit in our nooks and have a dull time of it. I too might like to dance and sing, but take a look out of the window—in this wet you don't even feel like going to church!"

Arina Petrovna paused, expecting the blockhead to make at least a grunt in reply; but he seemed turned to stone. She was beginning to lose her temper gradually, but controlled herself.

"And if you were dissatisfied about anything—perhaps there wasn't enough food, or you needed some linen, or something—why couldn't you have told your mother

straight out? 'Order some liver or some curd cakes for me, Mamma dear,' you should have said. Surely your mother would not have refused you that. Or take vodka now—suppose you wanted a drink, why, have it, bless you! A glass, two glasses—would your mother grudge it you? But see what you did—you weren't ashamed to ask from the serfs, yet you couldn't bring yourself to speak to your mother!"

But all those soft words were in vain: Stepan Vladimirovich was not moved in the least (Arina Petrovna had hoped that he might kiss her hand), he showed no signs of repentance and indeed did not seem to have heard anything she said.

From that day his silence was unbroken. For days on end he walked about his room, unconscious of any fatigue, frowning morosely and moving his lips. Sometimes he stopped as though wishing to give expression to something but unable to find the words. Apparently he had not lost the power of thinking, but his mind had so feeble a grasp on what passed before it that it was immediately forgotten; therefore his failure to find the right word did not even stir any impatience in him. As for Arina Petrovna, she believed that he was sure to set the house on fire.

"Not a word all day long!" she said. "But the blockhead must be thinking of something while he is silent! Mark my words, he'll set fire to the place!"

But the blockhead simply did not think at all. He seemed to have sunk into a cheerless gloom in which there was no room for fancy, to say nothing of reality. His brain was working at something, but that something had no relation either to the past, the present or the future. It was as though a black cloud had enveloped him from head to foot and he watched it and saw nothing but this cloud; he followed its imaginary curves, and at times shuddered as if he were warding it off. This mysterious cloud swallowed up both the outer and the inner world for him.

In December of the same year Porphiry Vladimirovich received the following letter from Arina Petrovna:

"Yesterday morning a new trial befell us with which the Lord has visited us; my son and your brother, Stepan, passed away. He was perfectly well the evening before

and had even taken supper, but in the morning he was found dead in his bed—so fleeting is this life of ours! And what grieves my heart most of all is that he left this sinful world without any ministration on his journey into the realm of the unknown.

“Let this be a lesson to us all: those who neglect their family duties must always expect such an end. Adversity in this life, premature death and eternal torments in the life to come—all spring from this source. For however wise and exalted we may be, if we do not respect our parents they will be the ones to reduce our cleverness and exalted ranks to nothing. Such are the rules which every person living in this world must learn by heart; as for the serfs they are also bound to honour their masters.

“In spite of this, however, the deceased was accorded all the honours due to him as my son. I sent to Moscow for the pall, and the funeral service was performed by the Father Archimandrite whom you know, together with other priests. Masses and requiem services are being said to this day, as our Christian custom requires. I am sorry my son is no more, but I dare not repine, nor do I advise you to, my children. For, who knows, we may be repining while his soul is rejoicing in heaven!”

GOOD RELATIVES

It is a hot midday in July. Everything seems to have died out on the Dubrovino estate. Not only those who have nothing to do but even those who have, have wandered off to lie down to rest in some shady corner. The dogs lie sprawling under the huge willow-tree in the middle of the front courtyard, and one can hear them snap their teeth catching flies, half-asleep. The very trees seem exhausted and stand drooping and motionless. All the windows, both in the manor-house and in the servants' quarters, are wide open. Heat comes sweeping down like a fiery wave; the ground, covered with short, scorched grass, is blazing hot; a blinding haze of golden light makes it difficult to distinguish objects in the distance. The house, once painted grey but now bleached, the small front garden, the birch copse across the road, the pond, the village and the rye fields adjoining it—everything is engulfed in the luminous mist. The air is thick with smells of all kinds, ranging from the fragrance of the flowering limes to the stench of the cattle yard. There is no sound. Nothing is heard except the rhythmic chopping of the cooks' knives in the kitchen, presaging the invariable cold soup and chops for dinner.

Noiseless anxiety pervades the house. The old mistress and two young girls, tense with expectation, are sitting in the dining-room, with their knitting forgotten and lying neglected on the table. In the maids' room two women are busy preparing compresses and mustard plasters, and the measured jingle of the spoons breaks the stillness like the chirrup of a cricket. Bare-footed servant girls cautiously run along the corridor on their way from the attic to the maids' room and back again. Now and then a shout comes

from upstairs: "What about the mustard plasters? Have you gone to sleep there?"—upon which one of the girls races up from the maids' room.

At last the creak of heavy footsteps is heard on the stairs, and the regimental doctor comes into the dining-room. He is a tall, broad-shouldered man, with firm, ruddy cheeks that seem bursting with health. He has a clear voice, a firm step, bright and cheerful eyes, full soft lips and a frank, open expression. He is a *bon vivant* in the full sense of the term, in spite of his fifty years; a man who has never yet shunned and will not shun for years to come any drinking or eating bout. He is very spruce in a snow-white piqué summer uniform with bright embossed buttons. He comes in smacking his lips and clicking his tongue.

"Look here, my dear! Bring us some vodka and something to eat!" he calls to one of the maids, stopping at the door leading into the corridor.

"Well, how is he?" the old lady asks anxiously.

"God's mercy is infinite, Arina Petrovna," the doctor replies.

"How do you mean? So then. . . ."

"Quite so. He'll drag on another two or three days and then good-bye."

The doctor makes a significant gesture and hums in an undertone, "*Headlong, headlong, headlong he will fly.*"

"But how can it be? He's had doctors treating him all this time—and all of a sudden. . . ."

"What doctors?"

"Our local doctor and one came from town too."

"Doctors, indeed! If a good seton were applied a month ago he'd live."

"Can nothing at all be done now?"

"I said, God's mercy is infinite, and I can add nothing to that."

"But perhaps it will have effect?"

"What will?"

"What you're doing now . . . those mustard plasters?"

"They might."

A woman in a black dress and a black kerchief brings in a tray with a decanter of vodka and two plates on it—

one with sausage and the other with caviare. Conversation stops when she comes in. The doctor pours out a glass, looks at it against the light, and clicks his tongue.

"Your health, Madam!" he says, turning to Arina Petrovna, and empties the glass.

"Thank you, doctor."

"This is just what Pavel Vladimirich is dying of in the prime of life—this vodka!" the doctor says, wrinkling with pleasure and sticking his fork into a piece of sausage.

"Yes, many come to grief through it."

"It's not everyone that can take this liquid—that's why. But since I can, I'll have another glass! Your health, Madam!"

"Drink up, do. There's no harm in it for you!"

"Not for me, there isn't! My lungs and kidneys and liver and spleen are all in order! Oh yes, by the way," he says, turning to the woman in black who stopped at the door as though listening to the conversation of the gentry, "what is there for dinner today?"

"Cold soup, chops, and roast chicken," the woman answers with a sour smile.

"Have you any salt fish?"

"Fish! I should say so, sir! There's sturgeon, and other fish. . . . Plenty of it."

"Then tell them to make us some cold soup with sturgeon for dinner . . . a good slice with some fat on it, you know! What is your name—Ulita, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir, that's what I am called."

"Well, be quick then, Ulita, there's a good girl!"

Ulita goes out. Heavy silence falls for a minute. Arina Petrovna gets up from the chair and peers out of the door to see if Ulita has really gone.

"Have you spoken to him about the orphans, Andrei Osipich?" she asks the doctor.

"I have."

"Well, and what does he say?"

"It's the same story. 'As soon as I recover,' he says, 'I'll certainly make my will and write the promissory notes.'"

Silence, heavier still, falls upon the room. The girls take up their cross-stitch embroidery and make stitch after stitch with fingers that tremble visibly; Arina Petrovna sighs dejectedly; the doctor paces up and down the room whistling, "*Headlong, headlong...*"

"You should have put it to him more strongly!"

"What could be stronger? I said he would be a scoundrel if he didn't provide for the orphans. Yes, you certainly did make a bloomer, dear lady! Had you called me in a month ago I would have made him a seton and done my best about the will too.... And now it will all go to Porphyry, the lawful heir... sure to!"

"Whatever shall we do, Grandmamma!" one of the girls whimpers, almost in tears. "How can Uncle do this to us?"

"I don't know, my dear, I don't know. I don't even know about myself. Today I am here, but tomorrow—I don't know where.... It may please God I should sleep in a barn or in a peasant's hut!"

"Goodness, how stupid Uncle is!" the other sister exclaims.

"You should have a rein over your tongue, young lady!" the doctor remarks, and, turning to Arina Petrovna, adds: "But what about yourself? Why don't you try and persuade him yourself?"

"No, no, no! He won't listen! He won't even see me! The other day I came into his room, and he said, 'What, coming to close my eyes, are you?' "

"I expect it's mostly Ulita's doing.... She sets him against you."

"It's her! It's all her doing! And she reports everything to that blood-sucker Porphyry! They say he keeps his horses harnessed all ready for him in case his brother's hour comes! And would you believe it, the other day she made an inventory of everything—furniture, crockery, clothes. 'Just to be on the safe side so that nothing gets lost,' she said. She wants to make out that we are thieves, if you please!"

"You should treat her in the military fashion.... Make her 'fly headlong', you know...."

But before the doctor can develop his idea further a maid runs breathless into the room, and cries in a frightened voice:

"The master! The master wants the doctor!"

The family that is being described here is already known to us. The old mistress is no other than Arina Petrovna Golovlyova; the dying owner of Dubrovino is her son, Pavel Vladimirovich; the two girls, Anninka and Lubinka, are her grand-daughters, the children of Anna Vladimirovna, to whom she once "chucked a cut". Not more than ten years have passed since we last saw them, but their positions changed so much that not a trace has remained of the artificial bonds which made the Golovlyov family appear something like an impregnable fortress.

The family stronghold erected by Arina Petrovna's indefatigable hands has collapsed or, rather, crumbled away so imperceptibly that she herself, unwittingly, became an accomplice and, indeed, an active agent in the process of destruction, the prime mover in which was, of course, Porphyry "the blood-sucker".

Arina Petrovna, the querulous and autocratic owner of the Golovlyov estates, has become a modest dependent in the house of her younger son—an idle dependent with no say at all in the domestic management. Her head is bowed, her back stooped, her eyes have lost their lustre, she walks with flagging steps, and her movements are no longer impetuous. For lack of anything better to do she has learned to knit in her old age, but she is not very good at it either, because her thoughts are always wandering—where?—she herself cannot always tell, but it is certainly far from her knitting-needles. She will sit and knit for a few minutes, and then suddenly her hands will fall in her lap, her head will lean on the back of the chair, and she will begin recalling the past. She will sit lost in her memories until the drowsiness of old age overcomes her old body. Sometimes she will get up and walk about the rooms looking for something, peeping into the corners, like a woman who was used to having her keys about her all her life and cannot think why and how she has lost them.

The first blow to Arina Petrovna's autocracy was dealt not so much by the abolition of serfdom as by the preparations that preceded it. At first there were rumours, then meetings of the serf-owners presenting addresses to the tsar, then provincial committees,* then organising committees—all of it was trying and disturbing. Arina Petrovna's fertile imagination kept dwelling on endless trifles. Suddenly she would wonder: "What am I to call Agashka now? Agafya, I suppose . . . or perhaps I'll even have to address her as Agafya Fyodorovna?" Or she would picture herself wandering through the empty house while all the servants had collected in the kitchen, and were guzzling away! When they were tired of gorging themselves they chucked the food under the table! Or she would imagine that she peeped into the cellar and saw two of her maids fairly stuffing themselves with food! She was just going to scold them, but the words stuck in her throat. "How can one say anything to them, now that they are free? I expect there's no way of bringing them to justice!"

Trifling as these things were, she gradually came to build up from them a fantastic world that engrossed her mind and paralysed her powers of action. All at once Arina Petrovna let go the reins of government, and for two years did nothing but exclaim from morning to night:

"I only wish they'd have it over and done with—at least we'd know where we were. But those endless parleys! It's neither one thing nor the other!"

It was at that time that Vladimir Mikhailich died—just when the committees were being dissolved. He died reconciled and at peace with himself and everyone, having renounced Barkov and everything connected with him. His last words were:

* Rumour that serfdom was to be abolished spread immediately after the death of Nicholas I (1855). In March 1856, Alexander II addressed the marshals of Moscow's nobility, announcing the government's intention to abolish serfdom and pointing to the peasants' mass riots endangering the monarchy. After several government appeals, the nobility in different gubernias called meetings to discuss the reform. In 1859, committees were formed to prepare the materials and debate the draft laws.—*Ed.*

"I thank the Lord that He did not let me appear before Him side by side with the serfs!"

These words sank deep into Arina Petrovna's impressionable mind, and her husband's death, together with her fantastic visions of the future, gave a tinge of hopelessness to the life at Golovlyovo. It was as though the old Golovlyovo house itself and every living being in it were about to die all together.

From the few complaints his mother dropped in her letters Porphyry Vladimirich guessed with amazing acuteness the turmoil in her thoughts. Arina Petrovna no longer reprimanded or lectured him in her letters, but for the most part expressed her trust in God's mercy, "which in these times of light faith doesn't fail even the serfs, to say nothing of those who, owing to their wealth, have been the staunchest support and adornment of the Church". Judas instinctively grasped that if Mamma was beginning to put her trust in God there must be a chink in her armour. And he took advantage of this chink with his usual sly cleverness.

Just before the abolition of serfdom* he paid an unexpected visit to Golovlyovo and found Arina Petrovna depressed and quite worn out with worry.

"Well, what's the news? What are they saying in Petersburg?" was the first thing she asked after they had greeted each other.

Porphyry dropped his eyes and remained silent.

"Now, just consider my position!" Arina Petrovna went on, understanding from her son's silence that nothing good was to be expected. "I have thirty of those sluts in the maids' room alone—what am I to do with them! If they are left for me to keep—how am I to feed them? Now I have potatoes and cabbage and bread enough, and so we manage to get along somehow. If there are no potatoes, I have some cabbage cooked; if there's no cabbage, we make do with cucumbers. But then I shall have to go to the market for every mouthful and pay in cash for it, buy and fetch everything—how am I to provide for all that pack?"

* 1861.—*Ed.*

Porphiry gazed into his darling Mamma's eyes and smiled bitterly in token of his sympathy.

"And if they just let them loose, so to say: 'Run along, dears, just follow your nose,' well, then . . . I don't know I simply don't know what will come of it!"

Porphiry grinned as though the idea of what would come of it struck him as very comical.

"No, don't you laugh, my friend! This business is serious, so serious that our only hope is that the Lord may put some sense into them, and then perhaps. . . . Take me, for instance: after all, I too count for something; I've got to be provided for somehow, but how? You know the way we've been brought up—just taught to dance and to sing and to receive callers, so how can I manage without my sluts? I can neither serve, nor clear away, nor cook a meal for myself—I can do nothing of that, my dear!"

"God is merciful, Mamma!"

"He *was* merciful, my dear, but now He seems to have abandoned us! He was merciful all right but He looks out for Himself too: we were good, and He was good to us; but now we've grown bad—so what can we expect! You know, sometimes I wonder if I'd better give it all up while there's still time. Really! I'll build myself a hut near your Papa's grave, and live there in peace and quiet!"

Porphiry Vladimirich pricked up his ears; his mouth watered.

"But who will manage the estate then?" he asked cautiously, as though throwing out a bait.

"Well, there's nothing for it: you'll have to manage it yourselves! After all I've provided enough! I can't bear all your burdens for you forever! . . ."

Arina Petrovna suddenly stopped short and raised her head. She was struck by her son's face, all aglow with a kind of rapacious light, an oily grin on his slobbering lips.

"I believe you are all ready to bury me!" she observed drily. "Isn't it too soon, my dear? Mind you're not making a mistake!"

And here the matter was dropped on this first occasion. But some conversations, once begun, will go on. In a few hours' time Arina Petrovna returned to the subject once again.

"I shall go to St. Sergius's,*" she mused aloud, "divide the property between you, buy myself a little house close to the monastery and settle there."

Porphyry Vladimirich knew better now and made no comment.

"Last year, while father was still alive," Arina Petrovna went on musing, "I was sitting alone in my bedroom one day and suddenly I seemed to hear someone whispering to me, 'Go to the Saint! Go to the Saint! Go to the Saint!'—three times. I looked round—there was no one! So I thought, why, this must be a vision! Well, I said, if my faith has found favour with the Lord, I am ready. And as soon as the words were out of my mouth the room was filled with a fragrance, such as you can't imagine! Of course I gave word to pack at once, and by evening I was on my way."

Arina Petrovna actually had tears in her eyes. Judas took advantage of this to kiss his Mamma's hand, and even ventured to put his arm round her waist.

"There, now you are a good girl!" he said. "Ah, how good it is, dearest, to get on well with the Lord! You send your prayers up to Him and He sends you His help. That's the way, Mamma darling!"

"Wait, I haven't told you everything yet. I arrived there the next evening and went straight to church. The evening service was going on; the singing, the lights, the fragrance from the censers—I simply did not know if I was in heaven or on earth. After the service I went to see Father Iona, and said to him, 'It's so uplifting in the church tonight, Your Reverence!' And he said, 'Why, Madam, it's because Father Avvakum had a vision during the service! Just as he raised his arms in prayer he saw a light in the very cupola overhead and there was a dove looking down on him!' And since then my mind's been made up that come what may, I'll spend the end of my life near St. Sergius."

"But who will take care of us? Who will look after your children? Ah, Mamma, Mamma!"

* *St. Sergius*—the Troitsko-Sergiyevsky Monastery near Moscow, in Zagorsk.—*Ed.*

"Oh, you are grown-up now, you can look after yourselves. And I . . . I'll go with Annushka's orphans to the Saint and live there under his wing! And one of them too may feel a desire to serve God—well, the Khotkov convent is next door! I'll buy myself a cottage and have a kitchen garden with potatoes and cabbage in it—I shall have enough for my needs."

This idle conversation went on for several days in succession; several times Arina Petrovna voiced some extremely daring intentions, took them back and declared them again, but at last brought matters to such a pitch that she could retreat no longer. Not more than six months after Judas's visit this was how things stood: Arina Petrovna had not gone to St. Sergius's nor had she retired to a hut beside her husband's grave, but she had divided the estate between her sons, keeping only the capital for herself. Porphiry was given the best share of the estate and Pavel a poorer one.

Arina Petrovna remained at Golovlyovo as before, but this decision was of course accompanied by a little family farce in the usual style. Porphiry wept and begged his darling Mamma to manage his estate like her own, using the income from it at her discretion—"And I shall be content with anything you can spare me, however little it may be." Pavel, on the contrary, thanked his mother coldly ("he looked as though he'd bite"), immediately retired from the army ("never asked his mother's blessing but just bolted out like one demented") and settled at Dubrovino.

After that a kind of blindness came over Arina Petrovna. The hidden image of Porphiry the Judas, that in the old days she had divined with such wonderful shrewdness, was suddenly clouded over, as it were. The only fact that stood out clearly was that, in spite of the division of the estate and the emancipation of the serfs, she was living at Golovlyovo as before, giving no account of her doings to anyone. Her other son was living next door to her, but what a difference! Whereas Porphiry had entrusted himself and his family entirely to his mother's care, Pavel, far from asking her advice about anything, hardly spoke to her when they met.

The more clouded her reason, the greater was her zeal for her affectionate son's welfare. Porphiry asked nothing from her, but she went out of her way to meet his wishes. She began to find fault with the shape of the Golovlyovo property. In one spot somebody else's land cut into it—it would be a good thing to buy that land; in another place a nice little farm could be started, but there was not enough meadow—and close by there was a meadow for sale, a lovely bit of meadow! Arina Petrovna was carried away, both as a mother and as a business woman who wants to display her brilliant abilities before her affectionate son. But Porphiry Vladimirich seemed to put on a shell of impenetrability. In vain did Arina Petrovna tempt him with the possible purchases; to all her suggestions to buy this or that wood or meadow he invariably answered, "I am quite content with what it has pleased you to give me, darling Mamma."

Such answers merely egged her on. Carried away by her business plans on the one hand, and on the other by a desire to spite "that rascal Pavel", who lived close by but would have nothing to do with her, she lost all conception of her actual connection with Golovlyovo. The old fever of acquisition possessed her once more, though she was no longer acquiring for herself but for her favourite son. The Golovlyovo estate increased, spread, and flourished.

And then, at the very moment when Arina Petrovna's capital had dwindled down so that it was almost impossible to live independently on the interest from it, Judas sent her, under cover of a most respectful letter, a whole bundle of book-keeping forms which were to guide her in the future in drawing up the annual accounts. Besides the main branches of farming a balance also had to be drawn up for gooseberries, raspberries, mushrooms, etc. A sample form was given for each item, somewhat as follows:

"The number of raspberry bushes in the year 18**	—
Newly planted in addition	—
Amount of berries collected from all the bushes	lb oz
Of that amount:	
Used by you, dear Mamma	lb oz

Used for jam for the household of His Excellency Porphyry

Vladimirich Golovlyov	lb oz
Given to boy X as a reward for good conduct	lb oz
Sold to the peasants as a treat	lb oz
Rotted for lack of buyers and for other reasons	lb oz
And so on, and so on.	

"Note: Should the present year's harvest be smaller than last year's the reason for it, such as drought, rain, hail, etc., must be set forth."

Arina Petrovna simply gasped. To begin with, she was astounded by her son's meanness: she had never dreamed that gooseberries could be regarded as an item in the book-keeping at Golovlyovo—and he seemed to be particularly keen on it; secondly, she understood perfectly well that all this accounting was nothing but a constitution binding her hand and foot.

The upshot of it was that after a long controversy by post Arina Petrovna, insulted and indignant, moved to Dubrovino, and immediately afterwards Porphyry Vladimirich retired from the service and settled at Golovlyovo.

From that time onwards a succession of colourless days of enforced idleness followed for the old woman. Pavel Vladimirich, devoid as he was of any marked characteristics, was peculiarly captious with his mother. He received her tolerably well, that is, he promised to give a home to her and his orphaned nieces, but on two conditions: first, she was not to go to his rooms upstairs; and, secondly, she was not to meddle in the management of the estate.

This second condition particularly distressed Arina Petrovna. Pavel's estate was run by two people: Ulita the housekeeper, a spiteful woman, caught in carrying on a secret correspondence with Porphyry, and Kiryushka, a former valet of Arina Petrovna's husband, who did not know a thing about farming, and who held daily discourses with his master in the obsequious manner of a flunkey. Both stole without a qualm. How Arina Petrovna's heart ached at the sight of the robbery that went on! How many attempts she made to warn her son, to tell him about the pilferage of tea, sugar, and butter. Enormous quantities were used, and many a time Ulita, utterly unabashed, put

handfuls of sugar in her pocket before the very eyes of her old mistress. Arina Petrovna saw it all, but had to remain a silent witness of the robbery, because the moment she opened her mouth to say something Pavel Vladimirich cut her short at once.

"Mamma!" he said. "We must have only one person giving orders in the house. It isn't my idea—that's what everybody does. I know that my orders are stupid—well, let them be stupid! And your orders are clever—very well! You are clever, you are very clever indeed, and yet Judas has turned you out of your home."

To crown it all, Arina Petrovna made an awful discovery: Pavel Vladimirich drank. The passion for drink, which he owed to his solitary life in the country, gained on him gradually, and at last reached such a pitch that it was bound to lead to the fatal end. When his mother first came to live in the house he seemed to have a little shame left in him and would often come downstairs to talk to her. Arina Petrovna noticed that his speech was incoherent, but for a long time she put it down to his stupidity. She did not like his coming down to talk to her, and considered these conversations a great trial. And, indeed, he did nothing, but grumble in an absurd kind of way. He complained that there had been no rain for weeks, and then it suddenly came down in torrents; or that there was a plague of beetles ruining all the trees in the orchard, or that the moles had dug up all the meadows. All this provided an endless source for lamentation. He would come downstairs, sit down opposite his mother and begin:

"There are clouds all round—Golovlyovo is not far off, is it? The blood-sucker had a splendid downpour yesterday, and we never seem to get any rain at all! The clouds go wandering all round, but not a drop on my land!"

Or:

"Just see how it's pouring! The rye has come into flower, and it does nothing but pour! Half the hay is rotten already, but it never seems to stop! Golovlyovo isn't far off, is it, the blood-sucker finished his haymaking ages ago while we have to sit and wait! We'll have to feed the cattle on rotten hay this winter."

Arina Petrovna sat listening to the stupid talk in si-

lence, but sometimes her patience gave way and she would snap:

"Your sitting cooling your heels doesn't help much either!"

No sooner had she said it than Pavel Vladimirich would fly into a fury.

"And what would you have me do? Transfer the rain to Golovlyovo, or what?"

"No, but generally speaking. . . ."

"No, you tell me, what you think I ought to do? Not 'generally speaking' but straight out. . . . Should I change the climate to please you? Look at Golovlyovo now: they needed rain, and it rained; they don't want it, and it stopped! Of course, everything grows well there. And with us it's the other way about! I'd like to hear what you'll have to say when we have nothing to eat!"

"Well, that must be God's will. . . ."

"Then just say that it's God's will! But this 'generally speaking' isn't much of an explanation!"

Sometimes he went so far as to find his estate a burden.

"Why ever did I have to be saddled with this Dubrovino?" he grumbled. "What's good about it?"

"What's wrong with Dubrovino, now? The soil is excellent, there's plenty of everything. . . . What's come into you suddenly?"

"What's come into me is that now is not the time to own any property at all! Money—that's another matter! Money is something you can put in your pocket and make off with. But this property. . . ."

"But what's so special about the times that we can't even own any property?"

"What's so special about them? You don't read the newspapers and I do. There are lawyers now all over the place—that's what! If a lawyer hears you have property he'll start hauling you round the law-courts!"

"But how can he do that if you have proper documents?"

"He'll do it right enough, you may be sure, the way they all do. Or perhaps that blood-sucker there will hire a lawyer and he'll send me summons after summons!"

"What next! It's not a lawless country, is it?"

"That's just because it isn't that he'll send me a summons. If it were, they would take the land away from me without any summons, but now they'll summon me. A friend of mine, Gorlopyatov, had an uncle who died, and he, like a fool, accepted his legacy. The legacy turned out to be worth a farthing, but the debts were a hundred thousand: notes of hand, and forged ones at that! So the law has been at him for the last three years: first they took his uncle's estate from him, and then sold his own by auction. That's what property is!"

"Is there really such a law?"

"If there wasn't they wouldn't have sold him up. That means there are laws of all sorts. If a man doesn't care what is right or wrong he can take advantage of any law; but if he does care the law is a closed book to him. Just try and find it in all those books!"

Arina Petrovna always gave way in these discussions. She often felt tempted to shout, "Out of my sight, you scoundrel!" but on second thought she refrained, and only repined mutely:

"Oh, Lord, how could I have borne such monsters? One is a real blood-sucker, and the other a kind of a natural! Who have I been saving it all for, going short of food and sleep? Who, oh Lord?"

As Pavel Vladimirich's addiction to drink grew more intense his conversations became more fantastic and, so to speak, startling. At last Arina Petrovna came to realise that something was wrong. For instance, she would notice that a decanter full of vodka was put on the sideboard in the dining-room every morning, but by dinner-time there was not a drop left in it. Or, as she sat in the drawing-room, she would hear the floor-boards creaking mysteriously in the dining-room close to the sideboard; when she called out: "Who is there?" she would hear someone walking quickly and stealthily upstairs.

"Good heavens, I believe he drinks!" she said to Ulita one day.

"That's right," Ulita replied with a nasty smile.

Now that his mother had guessed his secret, Pavel Vladimirich gave up all ceremony. One fine morning the sideboard disappeared from the dining-room altogether.

To Arina Petrovna's question what had become of it Ulita replied:

"The master ordered it moved upstairs; it will be more convenient for him there."

And indeed, upstairs the decanters followed one another with remarkable rapidity. Shut away in his room, Pavel Vladimirich came to hate the company of living men, and created for himself a queer world of fantasy. This world was like a stupidly heroic novel with the inevitable transformations, disappearances and sudden riches, a novel in which he and the "blood-sucker" were the chief characters. He himself did not fully realise how deepseated was his hatred for Porphiry. He hated him with his every thought, with every fibre of his being, hated him always, every minute. The vile image of Judas vividly came before his eyes, his ears rang with that lachrymously hypocritical twaddle, permeated with a kind of dry, almost abstract malice for everything that had life in it and failed to conform to the code of traditional hypocrisy. Pavel Vladimirich drank and remembered. He recalled all the insults and humiliations he had had to endure because of Judas's claim to be the head of the family. He recalled in particular the division of their property, counting every penny, comparing every bit of land—and hating his brother. Fired by drink, his imagination drew before him a series of dramatic situations in which all his wrongs were avenged, and in which it was he and not Judas who was inflicting the injuries. He imagined, for instance, that he won two hundred thousand in a lottery and came to tell the news to Porphiry, whose face became positively contorted with envy (a scene with a dialogue was made up). Or it was his grandfather dying (another scene with a dialogue, though he had no grandfather in reality), leaving a million to him and a fig to the "blood-sucker". Or he fancied that he had invented a means of becoming invisible and this enabled him to play such nasty tricks on Porphiry that it made him howl! His imagination was inexhaustible in inventing those tricks, and the rooms upstairs rang with his inane laughter, to the delight of Ulita, who hastened to inform Porphiry Vladimirich of what was going on.

He hated Judas, and at the same time feared him. He knew that Judas's eyes cast a poisonous spell, that his voice crept like a snake into the soul and paralysed the will—and so he resolutely refused ever to meet him. Sometimes the "blood-sucker" came to Dubrovino to kiss dear Mamma's hand (he had driven her out of the house, but remained as respectful as ever), and then Pavel Vladimirich would lock himself up in his rooms upstairs and stay there while Judas chatted with Mamma.

Thus the days passed until at last Pavel Vladimirich found himself up against a fatal disease.

The doctor spent the night at the house "as a matter of form" and left for town early in the morning. Before he left he said plainly that the patient could not last more than a couple of days, and that it was too late to think of a will now, because he could not even sign his name properly.

"He'll sign something unintelligible, and then you'll have no end of trouble with the law," he added. "Judas may have great respect for his Mamma, but he'd be sure to say it's forgery and start a case just the same, and if the law made his Mamma take a trip to Siberia, he'd merely have a service sung to bless her on her way."

All that morning Arina Petrovna went about in a daze. She tried to pray—perhaps God would give her some guidance—but she could not concentrate on prayer, and even her tongue would not obey her. She began, "Have mercy upon me, O God, after Thy great goodness," and suddenly in spite of herself she would find herself saying, "and deliver me from evil. Cleanse me! Cleanse me!" she mumbled mechanically, while her mind darted this way and that: it peeped upstairs, or looked into the cellar ("What a lot of food there was in the autumn, and now they've pilfered it all!"), or began to recall something from the far-away past. There it was all dim, and in that dimness she saw people, many people, pottering about, scraping and saving. "Blessed is the man... blessed is the man... like incense... teach me... teach me..." Finally, her tongue refused to move; her eyes gazed at the icons, seeing nothing—her mouth gaped open, her

hands lay folded on her stomach, and she stood motionless as though turned to stone.

Finally she sat down and wept. Tears poured from her lustreless eyes down her old withered cheeks, lingering in the folds of her wrinkles and dropping on to the greasy collar of her old cotton blouse. The feeling that possessed her was bitter, utterly hopeless and at the same time impotently rebellious. Her old age, her feebleness, her helpless position—all seemed to point to death as the only satisfactory solution, but then her past stepped in with its sense of power, freedom and plenty, and the memories of that past clutched at her, holding her down to the earth. "I wish I could die," flitted through her mind, but it would be immediately replaced by "I want to live!" She remembered neither Judas nor her dying son—they both ceased to exist for her, it seemed. She was not thinking of anyone, she was not accusing anyone or being indignant; she even forgot whether she had any capital and whether it was sufficient to provide for her old age. Anguish, mortal anguish possessed her whole being. "I am wretched! I am miserable!"—that was the only explanation she could have given of her tears. These tears had been accumulating drop by drop from the moment she had left Golovlyovo and come to live at Dubrovino. She was prepared for whatever awaited her, she had expected and foreseen it all; but somehow she had never realised so clearly that this end, the one she had expected and foreseen, would really come. And now this end had come—full of misery and desperate loneliness. All her life she had been building up something, wearing herself out for the sake of it, and now *it* proved to be a phantom. All her life the word "family" had been on her tongue; it was in the name of the family that she rewarded some and punished others; it was for the sake of the family that she had exposed herself to privations and suffering, that she had wrecked her whole life—and now it turned out that family was the one thing she did not have!

"Good God, can it be like this with everybody?" she kept thinking.

She sat, her head propped on her hand, her tear-stained face turned towards the rising sun, as though she would

say to it "See!" She did not groan or curse, but merely sobbed quietly, choking with tears; her very soul was on fire with the thought: "I have no one! No one, no one!"

At last she had no more tears to shed. She washed her face and walked aimlessly into the dining-room, where the girls assailed her with fresh complaints that struck her as particularly trying just then.

"Whatever is going to happen, Grandmamma? Shall we really be left penniless?" Anninka wailed.

"How stupid Uncle is!" Lubinka echoed her.

About midday Arina Petrovna decided to go in to her dying son. She cautiously climbed up the stairs, making hardly any sound, groped in the darkness and found the door leading to his rooms. Dusk reigned here; green curtains were drawn across the windows and the light barely filtered through them; the stagnant air was filled with a nauseous mixture of different smells, made up of the smell of berries, mustard plasters, lamp oil, and the odours that unmistakably suggest disease and death. There were only two rooms. Ulita sat in the first room sorting berries and furiously blowing away the flies that noisily swarmed over the heaps of gooseberries and impudently settled on her nose and lips. Through the half-opened door of the next room came a continual dry, barking cough, interrupted occasionally by painful expectoration. Arina Petrovna stopped irresolutely, peering into the semi-darkness and waiting to see how Ulita would react to her coming. But Ulita never stirred, as though she was quite certain that any attempt to influence the patient would now be fruitless. Only her lips moved angrily, and Arina Petrovna thought she heard her whisper, "The devil!"

"You had better go downstairs, my dear," Arina Petrovna said to Ulita.

"What next?" she snarled back.

"I want to speak to Pavel Vladimirich. Go!"

"Why, Madam, how can I leave him? If something happens there'll be no one to attend to him."

"What is it?" a hollow voice said from the bedroom.

"Tell Ulita to go away, my dear. I want to speak to you."

This time Arina Petrovna was so insistent that she

carried her point. She crossed herself and went into the next room. Pavel's bed stood along the inner wall, farthest away from the windows. He lay on his back covered with a white blanket and almost unconsciously pulled at a cigarette. In spite of the smoke, flies were attacking him so fiercely that he had to keep waving them off his face first with one hand, then with the other. His arms were so weak, so devoid of muscle that they clearly showed the outline of the bone, almost equally narrow at the wrist and the shoulder. His head clung to the pillow with a kind of hopelessness; his face and his whole body were burning with fever. His large sunken round eyes wandered vacantly as though searching for something; his nose had grown longer and sharper, his mouth was half-open. He did not cough, but his breathing was so laboured that the whole of his vital energy seemed concentrated in his chest.

"Well, how do you feel today?" Arina Petrovna asked, sinking into the armchair at his feet.

"Fairly well. . . . Tomorrow . . . that is, today. . . . When was it the doctor came?"

"He was here today."

"Well, that means tomorrow. . . ."

The invalid shifted uneasily, as though trying to remember a word.

"You'll be able to get up?" Arina Petrovna prompted him. "God grant you may, my dear."

Both were silent for a minute. Arina Petrovna wanted to say something, but in order to do so she had to start a conversation, and this was precisely what she could never do when alone with Pavel Vladimirich.

"Judas . . . all right?" the invalid asked at last.

"What could ail him! He's as right as rain!"

"I expect he is thinking, 'My brother Pavel is going to die, and by the grace of God I'll come into another little estate.'"

"We shall all die some day and everyone's property will go to the lawful heirs."

"But not to the blood-sucker! I'd rather throw it to the dogs than leave it to him!"

Here was an excellent opportunity: Pavel Vladimirich

had broached the subject himself. Arina Petrovna took advantage of it at once.

"You ought to give it a thought, my dear," she said casually, without looking at her son, but examining her hands against the light as though they were the chief object of her attention.

"What do you mean?"

"Why, if you don't wish your estate to go to your brother...."

The invalid said nothing, but his eyes dilated unnaturally and his face flushed ever redder.

"You might also consider, my dear, that you have two orphaned nieces—what sort of capital do they have! And there's your mother too!" Arina Petrovna went on.

"You've squandered it all on Judas, haven't you?"

"That's neither here nor there.... I know I have myself to blame.... But, after all, it was no great sin.... I thought, as he was my son.... And you needn't bring it up against your mother."

There was a pause.

"Well? Won't you say something?"

"And how soon do you expect me to die?"

"Not die, but still.... Other Christians too.... Although they're not going to die right away, but generally speaking...."

"'Generally speaking' again! You always talk 'in general'. Do you suppose I don't see?"

"What do you see, my dear?"

"I see you take me for a fool! Very well, suppose I am a fool, let me be one! Why do you come to a fool? You needn't come, you needn't worry!"

"I'm not worrying. I was speaking generally... that there's an end to every man's life."

"Well, wait for it!"

Arina Petrovna bowed her head and pondered. She saw very well that hers was a lost case, but the hopelessness of her future tormented her so that obvious as the futility of any further attempts was she could not give them up as futile.

"I don't know why you hate me so," she brought out at last.

"Not at all... I don't.... Not in the least! On the contrary.... Why, you have been so ... impartial to us all!"

He spoke in gasps, struggling for breath; there was laughter, broken and yet triumphant, in his voice; his eyes sparkled; his arms and legs jerked restlessly.

"Perhaps I have really sinned against you—then forgive me for heaven's sake."

Arina Petrovna got up and made a low bow, touching the floor with her hand. Pavel Vladimirich closed his eyes and made no answer.

"Well, about the property ... it's true that in your present condition ... it's no use thinking about making a will.... Porphiry is the legitimate heir; well, let him have the land. But what about your movable property, what about the capital," Arina Petrovna ventured to ask point-blank.

Pavel Vladimirich started but remained mute. It is quite possible that on hearing the word "capital" he did not think of Arina Petrovna's innuendoes at all but it simply occurred to him: "It's September now: time to receive the interest ... sixty-seven thousand six hundred multiplied by five and divided by two—how much will that be?"

"You are thinking, perhaps, that I wish for your death, but I assure you I don't, my dear! So long as you live, I'm happy enough. What does an old woman like me want? I am warm and comfortable in your home, I have plenty to eat, and even if I want something special I can always have it. I am merely saying that it is a Christian custom, while waiting for the life to come. . . ."

Arina Petrovna paused, trying to find a suitable phrase.

"To make provision for one's nearest and dearest," she ended, looking out of the window.

Pavel Vladimirich lay motionless, coughing quietly and not showing by any sign whether he was listening to his mother or not. He was evidently bored by her moralising.

"You might give away the capital while you live," Arina Petrovna said, as though throwing out a casual suggestion, and again began examining her hands against the light.

The invalid started slightly, but Arina Petrovna failed to notice it and went on:

"It is perfectly lawful to transfer capital, my dear. For it's a thing that may be gained or lost: it's here one day and gone the next. And you have to account to no one for it. You can give it to anyone you like."

Pavel Vladimirich suddenly gave a malicious laugh.

"You must have remembered Palochkin's story," he hissed. "He too *gave away* his money to his wife, and she ran away with her lover!"

"I have no lovers, my dear!"

"Then you'll run away without a lover ... with the capital!"

"So that's what you think of me!"

"I don't think of you at all. ... You've told the whole world I am a fool—well, a fool I am! I don't care if I am! That's a good hocus-pocus you've thought of—give you my money indeed! And what about myself? Would you have me go into a monastery to save my soul and watch you from there spending my money?"

He said it all in one breath, angry and excited, and it left him completely exhausted. For at least a quarter of an hour afterwards he coughed so violently that it was surprising to see this miserable wreck of a man have so much vigour still left in him. At last he recovered his breath and closed his eyes.

Arina Petrovna looked about her distractedly. Up to that moment she somehow could not believe it, but now she was finally convinced that every fresh attempt to argue with the dying man would merely bring the day of Judas's triumph nearer. Judas's image loomed before her eyes. She saw him following his brother's coffin, giving him a Judas's kiss while two nasty little tears crawled from his eyes. Now the coffin was being lowered into the ground. "Good-bye, brother!" Judas would exclaim, twitching his lips, rolling his eyes, and trying to put a note of sorrow into his voice, and then say half-turning to Ulita, "Don't forget to bring home the frumenty, and mind you put it on a nice clean tablecloth. ... We must have it at the funeral dinner." Then there would be the dinner, during which Judas would talk to the priest without a pause about his deceased brother's virtues, and his praises would be fully confirmed by the priest. "Ah,

brother, brother, you would not stay with us longer!" he would exclaim, getting up from the table and asking for the priest's blessing. And now at last everyone would have had enough to eat and even taken an after-dinner nap. Judas would be walking about the rooms with a proprietary air, checking the inventory and glancing suspiciously at his mother whenever he felt doubtful about anything.

All these inevitable scenes of the future kept flashing before Arina Petrovna's eyes and the sound of Judas's unctuous and piercing voice rang in her ears:

"Do you remember, Mamma, my brother had a pair of little golden studs... such pretty ones; he used to wear them on holidays?... I can't think what can have become of those studs!"

No sooner had Arina Petrovna come downstairs than a coach-and-four appeared on the hill by the Dubrovino church. Porphyry Golovlyov was solemnly sitting in the back seat with his hat off, crossing himself at the church; opposite him sat his two sons, Petenka and Volodenka. Arina Petrovna's heart sank. "The jackal has scented carrion," she thought. Anninka and Lubinka, too, felt alarmed, and clung helplessly to their grandmother. The house that had only a minute before been so quiet was in commotion now: doors banged, people ran to and fro, there were shouts of: "The master is coming! The master is coming!", and the whole population of the place rushed out in a body on to the front steps. Some were crossing themselves, others simply stood in an expectant attitude; everyone, however, seemed to realise that what had so far been going on at Dubrovino was merely temporary, and that only now they were in for the real thing, with a real master over them. Many of the old people, former house-serfs, had been receiving from the "old" master a monthly allowance of provisions instead of eating at the common table; many fed their cows on the master's hay, had their own kitchen gardens, and altogether had an easy time of it; so that, naturally, all were anxious to know whether the "new" master would leave things as they were or would introduce his own Golovlyovo ways.

Judas had meanwhile driven up to the house, and from the greeting accorded to him concluded that his brother's end was nigh. In leisurely fashion he stepped out of the carriage, waved away the servants, who had rushed to kiss the master's hand, folded his hands devoutly, and slowly walked up the steps whispering a prayer. His face expressed both sorrow and an unswerving submission to destiny. As a man he sorrowed, as a Christian he did not dare to repine. He was praying for grace but, above all, trusted in and bowed before the will of Providence. His sons walked behind him, side by side. Volodenka was mimicking his father, folding his hands, rolling his eyes and moving his lips. Petenka was enjoying his brother's performance. A crowd of servants followed them in silence.

Judas kissed his Mamma's hand, then her lips, then her hand again, patted the "darling Mamma" on the waist and said, sadly shaking his head:

"You are grieving, I see! It's wrong, my dear! Oh, how wrong it is! You should ask yourself, 'And what will God say to that?' Why, He will say, 'Here I am doing everything for the best in My wisdom, and she is repining!' Ah, Mamma, Mamma!"

Then he kissed both his nieces, and with the same charming familiarity in his voice said to them:

"You in tears too, grasshoppers! Now, I will have none of this! Smile at once, if you please, and that's the end of it!"

And he stamped, or rather pretended to stamp, his feet in anger, while actually it was only a gracious jest.

"Look at me," he went on. "As a brother—I am grieved. Perhaps, I, too, have wept. I am sorry for my brother, deeply sorry. . . . I cry a little, but then I think: 'But there's God! Surely God knows better than we do.' You think about it and it cheers you. That's what everyone ought to do. You, Mamma, and you, dear nieces, and everyone . . . all of you," he added, turning to the servants, "look at me. See how well I'm bearing up!"

And with the same charming playfulness he showed how he was bearing up, that is, he drew himself up, put out one foot, threw back his head, and puffed out his

chest. Everyone smiled but somehow on one side of their mouths, as if to say, "Now the spider is off weaving his web!"

Having finished his performance in the hall, Judas went into the drawing-room and kissed his mother's hand again.

"So that's how it is, Mamma darling!" he said, settling down on the sofa. "Here's brother Pavel too. . . ."

"Yes, Pavel too. . . ." Arina Petrovna echoed quietly.

"Yes, yes, yes. It seems too soon, much too soon. You know, Mamma, though I try to keep up my courage, in my heart I too . . . grieve for my brother very, very much. He has always disliked me. I know he has. Who knows, perhaps that's why God is punishing him now."

"You might forget it at a moment like this. You shouldn't rake up your old quarrels now. . . ."

"I forgot them long ago, Mamma! I merely mentioned it in passing, that Pavel disliked me—but why, I don't know! Haven't I tried everything . . . approached him this way and that. . . . 'My dear,' I'd say, and 'Brother darling,' but he just turned his back on me, and there was nothing for it! And, all unseen to us, God has judged it best to shorten his days."

"I tell you, you mustn't talk about it now. The man is at his last gasp."

"Yes, Mamma, death is a great mystery. You know not the day nor the hour—that's the kind of mystery it is. There he was making all sorts of plans; he thought he was above us all, there was no reaching up to him—and all at once, in a twinkling, God upset all his plans. He might be only too glad now to cover up his sins—but, no, they are all written down in the Book of Life. And what is written in that book is not easily scraped out, Mamma!"

"But surely God accepts repentance."

"I hope so, I sincerely hope so. My brother disliked me but I wish him well. I wish well to everyone. To those who hate me and injure me—to all. He was unfair to me, and so God sent him this illness. It was God's doing, not mine. And does he suffer much, Mamma?"

"No, not so very. . . . The doctor has given us hope, in fact," Arina Petrovna lied.

"There, that's splendid now! Don't you grieve, dear Mamma, he may get over it yet. Here we are sorrowing for him and repining against the Creator, and perhaps he is sitting up in bed quietly and thanking God for his recovery."

Judas was so pleased with the idea that he positively sniggered.

"I have come to stay with you for a few days, Mamma," he went on, as though he were giving Mamma a pleasant surprise. "I have to, you know. . . . It's a family matter. Anything may happen and, after all, as a brother . . . and you may need comforting and advice and some help. You'll allow me, won't you?"

"It's not for me to give permissions—I'm only a guest here myself."

"Very well then, my dear. Today being Friday, will you order a lenten dinner for me, if you would be so kind? Perhaps, a little salt fish and some mushrooms and a bit of cabbage. I don't want much, you know. And meanwhile I'll do my duty as a brother and go upstairs to the invalid. Who knows, I may help him. I may do something for his immortal soul if not for his body. And it seems to me in his condition the soul is of more importance. The body we can mend with tonics and compresses, Mamma, but the soul needs a more serious remedy."

Arina Petrovna made no rejoinder. The thought that "the end" was inevitable took possession of her so completely that she watched in a kind of stupefaction all that was happening around her. She saw Judas get up from the sofa with a grunt and shuffle along, stooping. (He liked to pretend to be overcome by ailments on occasion; he fancied this made him look more venerable.) She understood that his sudden appearance upstairs was bound to upset Pavel badly and might even hasten his death, but she was overcome with such weariness after the emotions of the day that she felt as though she were in a dream.

While all this was going on Pavel Vladimirich was in a state of indescribable agitation. He lay quite alone upstairs and heard the sounds of some unusual commotion in the house. Every door that banged and every footstep

that echoed in the passage had something mysterious about it. He called, shouted at the top of his voice for several minutes, but, seeing that shouts were useless, he mustered all his strength and sat up in bed, listening intently. The running about and the loud hum of many voices stopped all at once, and there was a deadly stillness. Something unknown and terrible seemed to close in upon him; the daylight hardly penetrated through the window curtains, and the sanctuary lamp burning before the icon in the corner made the dusk that filled the room appear darker and denser. Pavel fixed his gaze on that mysterious corner as though something in the depths of it had struck him for the first time. The icon in its gilded setting, lit up by the glow from the lamp, stood out in the darkness with a startling vividness like some living thing; a circle of light flickered on the ceiling, bright one instant and faint the next, as the flame flared up or burned low. Everything below was in semi-darkness with darker shadows wavering against it. On the wall next to the lighted corner hung a dressing-gown that seemed to move as the patches of light and shadow passed over it. Pavel Vladimirich gazed and gazed at it, and it suddenly seemed to him that everything began to stir in that corner. Solitude, helplessness, deadly stillness, and shadows swarming in the midst of it! He fancied that those shadows were marching, marching on him.... In indescribable terror he stared, open-mouthed, at the mysterious corner; he could not scream and only groaned. His hoarse, spasmodic groans sounded like a bark. He heard neither the creaking of the stairs nor the cautious, shuffling footsteps in the room next to his—and suddenly Judas's hateful figure appeared by his bedside. He imagined that he had come out of there, out of that darkness stirring so mysteriously before his eyes, that there were more shadows there... endless shadows coming towards him.

"Why? Where from? Who let you in?" he cried, sinking helplessly on to his pillow.

Judas was standing at his bedside, looking intently at him and sorrowfully shaking his head.

"Are you in great pain?" he asked, in a voice as unctuous as he was able to make it.

Pavel Vladimirich said nothing, and stared at him senselessly, as though trying to understand. Judas meanwhile went up to the icon, knelt with great feeling, bowed three times to the ground, and, getting up, came to the bedside once more.

"Well, my dear, get up. God has sent us grace!" he said in such a joyful voice, settling down in the armchair, that one might think he had the "grace" in his pocket.

Pavel Vladimirich understood at last that this was no shadow but the blood-sucker in the flesh. He seemed to shrink suddenly, as though in a shivering fit. Judas's eyes had a bright, brotherly expression, but Pavel knew very well that there was a "noose" concealed behind it, ready to be flung out to strangle him by the throat.

"Ah, brother, brother, what a bad boy you are!" Judas went on with brotherly facetiousness. "Come, try and take yourself in hand! See if you can't get up and run! Trit-trot, trit-trot—let Mamma see what a fine fellow you are! Up we get—there's a good boy!"

"Go away, you blood-sucker!" the sick man cried desperately.

"A-h, dear, dear! I have come to you with comfort and affection, and you . . . you called me that! Oh, how very wrong! I wonder, my dear, you could bring yourself to say such a thing to your own brother. You should be ashamed, my dear, really ashamed. Wait a bit, I'll straighten your pillow for you." Judas got up and poked his finger into the pillow. "That's better," he went on, "that's splendid now. You can lie as snug as you please—no need to straighten it till tomorrow, it's so comfy."

"Go away . . . you."

"Ah, how your illness has spoiled you! You've grown quite bad-tempered. 'Go away,' you keep saying, but how can I go? Now suppose you're thirsty—I am here to give you some water. The icon-lamp there isn't burning properly, I'll put it right and add a nice little drop of oil to it. You'll lie in bed and I'll sit beside you in peace and quiet. We'll never notice the time pass."

"Go away, you blood-sucker!"

"Here you are abusing me, but I will pray for you. I know that it isn't you who are saying this but your illness.

It's my rule to forgive people, my dear boy. I forgive everyone. Today, for instance, as I was coming to you, I met a peasant on the road, and he said something. Well, God forgive him! He defiled his own tongue, that's all. And I . . . I wasn't in the least angry with him. Why, I actually made the sign of the cross over him—really I did!”

“I suppose you had robbed . . . that peasant?”

“Who? I? No, my friend, I don't rob people. Highwaymen do that, but I always act according to the law. I caught his horse in my meadow, and so I said, ‘Come to the magistrate, my good man. If the magistrate says you may graze your horses on other people's meadows, so be it. But if he says you mustn't, there is nothing for it, you'll have to pay a fine.’ I always act according to the law, my dear boy, always.”

“You Judas . . . robbing your own mother.”

“You may be angry if you like, but I will say again that this is not the way to talk. And if I weren't a Christian I might . . . hold it against you.”

“You robbed her, you robbed her, you took every penny from her.”

“Hush now, hush! I will pray for you, that may soothe you a little.”

Although Judas tried hard to control himself, he was so stung by the dying man's abuse that his lips became white and contorted. Hypocrisy was, however, so much a part of his nature that he simply could not stop acting once he had started. With the last words he actually did kneel down, and spent a quarter of an hour raising his arms to heaven and whispering. Having done this he returned to the dying man's side, with a serene, almost radiant expression on his face.

“You know, my brother, I have come to talk to you of a serious matter,” he said, settling down in the armchair. “Here you are abusing me, while I am thinking of your immortal soul. Tell me, please, when did you last partake of the Holy Sacrament?”

“Oh God, this is too much. . . . Take him away. Ulita! Agashka! Is anyone there?” Pavel moaned.

“There, there, calm yourself, my dear. I know you

don't like talking of it. Yes, brother, you have always been a bad Christian, and you remain one to this day. But it would be proper, oh how proper it would be to think of your soul at a moment like this! Our immortal soul, you know . . . ah, how careful one must be about it, my friend! You know what the Church prescribes? Bring thanksgiving and supplications, it says. . . . And then again, we pray for a Christian end to our life, painless, peaceful, and unashamed. That's what it ought to be, my dear. You should send for the priest, and with sincere penitence. . . . Very well, very well, I won't. But it would be a good thing, you know."

Pavel's face was purple, and he was almost choking; if at that moment he could have smashed his head against the wall he would certainly have done so.

"About the estate too. Perhaps you have made some arrangements?" Judas continued. "It's a neat little estate you have here, there's no gainsaying it. The land is even better than at Golovlyovo, the soil is more sandy. And there's your capital, too. Of course I know nothing about it. I merely know that you let your peasants buy out their land, but I have never been interested to inquire into the details. This very day, for instance, I was saying to myself as I drove here, 'I expect my brother Pavel has some capital. But if he has,' I thought, 'he is sure to have made some arrangements about it.'"

The sick man turned away, sighing deeply.

"You haven't? Well, that's all the better, my friend. Let the law decide—it's fairer so. It won't be strangers but your nearest and dearest who'll get it. Take me now: frail as I am, with one foot in the grave, so to say, yet I think, why should I make arrangements if the law can settle it all for me? And how good it is, my dear, how good! There can be no quarrels or envy or intrigues—it's the law."

It was terrible. It seemed to Pavel Vladimirich that he was buried alive, that he lay fettered by lethargy, unable to stir a limb, while he had to listen to the blood-sucker jeering at his corpse.

"Go away, for Christ's sake, go!" he began imploring his tormentor at last.

"Now, now, calm yourself, I'll go. I know you dislike

me.... It's a shame, my friend, a very great shame to dislike your own brother. But as for me I love you. I always say to my children, 'Though my brother Pavel has wronged me, I love him all the same.' Then you haven't made a will? Well, that's excellent, my friend. But sometimes even while one's alive the capital may be filched away, especially if one lives by oneself, with no relatives.... But I'll keep an eye on it. Yes? What? I've bored you? Very well, so be it, I'll go. I'll just say a prayer before I go."

He stood up, folded his hands, and whispered hurriedly to himself:

"Good-bye, my dear, don't worry. Have a nice little sleep, and perhaps, God willing, you'll be better. And meanwhile I'll have a chat with Mamma, and maybe we'll think of something. I have asked them to cook a lenten dinner for me, brother.... A little salt fish, some mushrooms, a bit of cabbage.... You must excuse me. What is it? Am I boring you again? Oh dear, oh dear! Very well, very well, I am going. The chief thing, my dear, is not to worry, not to excite yourself. Sleep tight, with your little grunts and snores." And with this parting witicism he took himself off at last.

"Blood-sucker!" The shriek that followed him was so piercing that even Judas felt stung.

While Porphiry Vladimirich was having his chat upstairs Arina Petrovna collected the young people round her downstairs (partly with the object of finding something out from them) and engaged them in conversation.

"Well, and how are you getting on?" she turned to her eldest grandson Petenka.

"Fairly well, Grandmamma. I shall get my commission next year."

"Will you? You've been promising it for some years now. I can't make it out. Are your examinations so hard or what?"

"He failed at the last exams in 'First Principles', Grandmamma. The priest asked him, 'What is God?' and he started jabbering, 'God is a spirit—and a spirit... and to the Holy Spirit....'"

"You poor boy! Whatever came into you? Why, even my orphans here must know it!"

"I should think so! God is a spirit, invisible..." Anninka hastened to show off her knowledge.

"No one has seen Him anywhere," Lubinka interrupted her.

"All merciful, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent," Anninka continued.

"Whither shall I go then from Thy Spirit; or whither shall I go then from Thy presence: if I climb up into heaven Thou art there; if I go down to hell Thou art there also!"

"That's the way you should have answered, and you'd have had your epaulettes by now. And what are you going to do with yourself, Volodya?"

Volodya turned crimson and made no reply.

"You are another such, I see! Ah, children, children! You look bright enough, and yet learning seems too much for you! And it isn't as though your father spoiled you. . . . How does he treat you now?"

"Just the same, Grandmamma."

"Does he still thrash you? I heard he has given that up."

"Not so much now, but still . . . but the worst thing is, he pesters us so. . . ."

"Now that's something I can't understand. How can one's father pester one?"

"He does, Grandmamma, very much so. We mayn't go out without permission, mayn't take anything. . . . It's beastly!"

"Well, you should ask permission—it wouldn't kill you, would it?"

"Oh no! If you start saying anything to him you'll never hear the last of it. 'Wait and see, slowly does it,' and all the rest of it. . . . He's so tiresome, Grandmamma!"

"You know, Grandmamma, he eavesdrops behind our door! Only the other day Petenka caught him at it."

"You naughty boys! And what did he do?"

"Nothing. I said to him, 'Eavesdropping is bad practice, Papa. You might easily get your nose smashed, you know.' And he merely said, 'There, there! There's no harm in it. I am like a thief in the night, my boy!'"

"The other day he picked up an apple in the orchard, Grandmamma, and put it in his cupboard—and I went and ate it. There was such a to-do! He searched for it all over the place, cross-questioned all the servants. . . ."

"Has he grown so stingy, or what?"

"No, it isn't that he is stingy but . . . he is always after such trifles. He hides away bits of paper, looks for wind-fall."

"He says his prayers in his study every morning, and afterwards gives us a bit of communion bread . . . stale as stale could be! But we played a trick on him one day: we found out where he keeps the bread, cut a hole in the bottom, scraped out the soft part and put in a lump of butter."

"Well, I must say you are a pair of mischief-makers!"

"But just imagine his surprise the next day! Communion bread with butter in it!"

"I expect you caught it badly?"

"Not really. . . . He merely kept spitting all day and saying, as though to himself, 'The blackguards!' But of course we pretended that it wasn't meant for us. You know, Grandmamma, he is afraid of you!"

"Why should he be afraid of me? I am not a scarecrow!"

"He is afraid—that's true. He thinks you will curse him. He is terribly scared of being cursed."

Arina Petrovna pondered. "And what if I really do . . . curse him?" came into her mind. "Suppose I really do say, 'I curse you for ever!'" This idea was superseded by one of more practical importance: "What is Judas doing? What is he up to upstairs? I can just see him twisting and turning himself inside out!" At last a happy thought struck her.

"Volodya," she said, "you are light on your feet, my dear, what about walking up quietly and listening to what's going on *there*, that's a good boy."

"With pleasure, Grandmamma."

Volodya tiptoed to the door and disappeared behind it.

"What made you think of paying us a visit today?"

Arina Petrovna began her questioning of Petenka.

"We had long been meaning to come, Grandmamma, and this morning Ulita sent a messenger to say that the

doctor had been and that Uncle was sure to die today or tomorrow."

"Well, and have you had any conversation . . . about the legacy?"

"We talk of nothing but legacies, Grandmamma! He keeps telling us of how things were in the old days, even before Grandpapa's time. . . . He doesn't even forget Goryushkino! 'If Auntie Varvara Mikhailovna had had no children, Goryushkino would have been ours!' he says. 'And goodness only knows by whom she had those children, but we should not judge others. We see a mote in our neighbour's eye and don't notice a beam in our own. . . . That's how it is,' he says."

"He says that, does he? Auntie was married all right—even if there had been anything, the husband made it right!"

"But he does say it, Grandmamma. He repeats the story every time we drive past Goryushkino. 'My grandmother Natalya Vladimirovna came from Goryushkino,' he says, 'it ought by rights to have remained in the Golovlyov family, but Papa—God rest his soul—went and gave it as dowry to his sister. The melons that used to grow at Goryushkino!' he says. 'Twenty pounds each—that's the kind of melons they were.'"

"Twenty pounds indeed! I have never heard of such. And what does he say about Dubrovino?"

"Oh, the same sort of thing—melons and pumpkins . . . such silly things, you know. Though the last few days he kept asking, 'And how much capital do you think my brother Pavel has, children dear?' He figured it all out long ago, Grandmamma . . . what the redemption money came to, and when the estate was mortgaged, and how much has been paid off. . . . We saw the paper on which he made all these calculations, Grandmamma, and we carried it off. We nearly drove him crazy with that paper. . . . He put it in his table, and we moved it to the cupboard; he locked it up in the cupboard, and we found a key to match and put the paper with the communion bread. . . . He went to the bath-house one day and saw that paper lying on the shelf there!"

"You have a gay time of it!"

Volodenka came back; all turned their eyes to him.

"I couldn't hear properly," he said in a whisper. "I only heard Father saying, 'Painless, peaceful, unashamed,' and Uncle shouting, 'Go away, you blood-sucker!'"

"And about the will. . . . Did you hear anything?"

"I think there was something, but I couldn't catch it. . . . Father closed the door very tight, Grandmamma. I could only hear his buzzing. And then Uncle shouted suddenly, 'Go away!' So I made off."

"I wish he'd provide for the orphans at least. . . ." Arina Petrovna pondered dejectedly.

"If Father gets it he won't give anything to anybody, Grandmamma!" Petenka assured her. "Sometimes I think he'll cut us off with a penny, too!"

"Well, he can't carry it into the grave with him, can he?"

"No, but he will think of some way. He had something on his mind when he was talking to the priest the other day. He asked him, 'Suppose one were to build a Tower of Babel, Father—would it cost much?'"

"Oh, there's nothing in that. . . . It may've been just curiosity. . . ."

"No, Grandmamma, he really has some sort of scheme. If it's not the Tower of Babel, he'll leave his money to the Athos monastery, but certainly not to us!"

"And will Father have much when Uncle dies?" Volodya inquired.

"God alone knows who will die first."

"No, Grandmamma, Father is quite certain. When we drove past the Dubrovino boundary this morning he took off his cap, crossed himself, and said, 'Thank God, we're driving into our own property again!'"

"He has worked it all out, Grandmamma. He saw a copse and said, 'A lovely copse, that, if properly looked after!' Then he saw the meadow and said, 'A fine meadow! Just see how many haystacks there are! There was a stud-farm here before!'"

"Yes, yes. . . . The copse and the meadow—it will all be yours, my dears," Arina Petrovna sighed. "Goodness me, I believe the stairs are creaking."

"Hush, hush, Grandmamma. That's him . . . like a thief in the night . . . eavesdropping."

They relapsed into silence, but it proved to be a false alarm.

Arina Petrovna sighed and whispered to herself, "Ah, children, children." The young men stared hard at the girls, devouring them with their eyes, while the girls were silently envious.

"Have you ever seen Mademoiselle Lotare, cousin dear?" Petenka asked.

Anninka and Lubinka glanced at each other as though asking whether this was a question on history or geography.

"In *La belle Hélène* . . . she acts the part of Helen."

"Oh, yes . . . Helen . . . and Paris, isn't it? 'Being young and handsome he inflamed the goddesses' hearts'? We know, we know," Lubinka cried joyfully.

"That's it, that's it. The way she does that *cas-ca-ader*, *ca-as-ca-der* . . . it's wonderful!"

"The doctor this morning kept singing, 'Headlong, headlong, headlong he will fly.'"

"'Headlong'—that was Lyadova's* song. . . . Now, cousin, there was a charming creature for you! When she died a crowd of some two thousand followed her coffin. . . . People thought there would be a revolution."

"What's this you're talking about, theatres, is it?" Arina Petrovna interposed. "They shouldn't be thinking of the theatre, my dear, the convent is the place for them."

"You are bent on burying us in a convent, Grandmamma," Anninka whined.

"You come to Petersburg instead of the convent, cousin dear. We'll show you everything there."

"They ought to be thinking pious thoughts, my dear, and not be hankering after pleasures," Arina Petrovna went on sententiously.

"We'll take them for a drive to St. Sergius's, Grandmamma—that will be pious all right."

* V. A. Lyadova (1839-1870)—a well-known light opera singer, who was a great success in Offenbach's comic operas.—*Ed.*

The girls' eyes positively glowed, and the tips of their noses turned pink when they heard this.

"They say the singing there is simply beautiful!" Aninka exclaimed.

"You may be sure of that, cousin. The way they sing 'Let us put away all earthly care'—even Father couldn't do it so well. And afterwards we'd drive you down Podyacheskaya Street."

"We'd teach you everything, everything, cousin. There are many young ladies like you in Petersburg, you know. You can hear their heels go patter-patter down the street."

"I dare say, you could teach them that," Arina Petrovna interrupted. "Leave them alone, for Christ's sake . . . you teachers! The idea! A nice sort of learning you'd give them! When Pavel dies I will go with them to the Khotkov Convent. . . . We'll settle very nicely and snugly there."

"You are still at your ribald talk?" a voice said suddenly at the door.

Absorbed in the conversation nobody heard Judas stealing up like a thief in the night. His head was bowed, his face pale and tear-stained, his hands were folded on his chest, and his lips were whispering. He looked round for an icon and, finding it, sent up a short prayer to God.

"Oh, how poorly he is! How poorly!" he exclaimed at last, embracing "darling Mamma"

"Is it as bad as all that?"

"Very, very bad, my dear. . . . And do you remember what a fine-looking fellow he used to be?"

"I can't say that I do. . . . He never looked particularly fine to me."

"Now, don't say that, Mamma! He always looked splendid. . . . I remember so well the way he looked when he left the cadet corps—broad-shouldered, well set up, the picture of health! Yes, yes . . . that's how it is, Mamma dear! We are all in God's hands. Today we are well and strong and want to live, to have a bit of a gay time and good things to eat, and tomorrow. . . ." He made a gesture of despair and shed a tear.

"Did he talk to you at least?"

"Very little, my dear; he only said, 'Good-bye, brother.'



And you know, he feels it, Mamma. He feels that he is in a bad way."

"I should think he would, coughing like he does."

"No, Mamma, I don't mean that. I was thinking about insight; they say man is given insight; he feels it beforehand when he is about to die. But sinners, I understand, are denied this comfort."

"Oh, indeed! And has he said anything about the will?"

"No, Mamma. He was going to say something but I stopped him. No, I said, don't let us speak of it. I shall be pleased with anything you choose to leave me in your kindness—and if you don't leave me anything I shall pray for your soul just the same. But he does so want to live, Mamma. He clings to life—how he clings to it!"

"Who doesn't!"

"No, Mamma, speaking of myself, for instance—if it should please the Lord to call me to Him, I should be ready to go any moment."

"It's all very well if you are called to God, but what if it's to Satan?"

The conversation went on in this style till dinner, during dinner and after dinner. Arina Petrovna could hardly sit still with impatience. While Judas was holding forth, the thought came more and more often into her mind, "And what if I really . . . curse him?" But Judas had no suspicion of the storm raging in his mother's heart. He looked perfectly serene and went on torturing his dear Mamma with his hopeless twaddle.

"I'll curse him. I will. I will," Arina Petrovna was saying to herself more and more decisively.

The rooms smelt of incense, melancholy singing resounded through the house; the doors were wide open, those who wished to take leave of the deceased came and went. While Pavel Vladimirich lived no one took any notice of him; now that he had died everyone felt sorry for him. They recalled that "he never wronged anyone", "never said a rude word to anybody", "never looked askance at anyone". These facts, that before had seemed merely negative, now suddenly appeared as something positive, and from the desultory, idle talk usual at funerals emerged

a picture of a "good master". Many seemed to regret something, confessing that they had on occasion taken advantage of the "good master's" simplicity—but then who could have known that that simplicity would come to so early an end? While it was there to exploit they thought it would last for ever, and all of a sudden.... But were they given another chance, they would have robbed him just the same: "Come on, fellows! No need to spare a fool!" One peasant brought Judas three rubles and said:

"It's my debt to Pavel Vladimirich. There was no note of hand—but here's the money."

Judas took it, praised the peasant and said that he would give those three rubles towards the oil for an "ever-burning" sanctuary lamp.

"You will be able to see it, my friend, and so will everyone, and your late master's soul will rejoice. And perhaps he will be able to do something for you up *there* with his prayers. You may not be expecting anything—and suddenly God will send you luck."

Very likely, comparison played a certain part in the people's verdict on the dead man's character. Judas was not liked. One could get round him, of course, but he was so fussy over silly trifles and always pestering people. Few peasants ventured to rent his land for farming, for if they ploughed or mowed an inch more ground than was legally theirs or delayed payment for as little as a minute, he immediately went to law. He plagued many in this way, with no profit to himself (his pettifogging habits were so well known that the court refused his claims almost without going into the case), and the litigation meant expense and loss of time to the peasants. "Buy a neighbour rather than a house," says the proverb—and everyone knew what kind of neighbour the master of Golovlyovo was. It was little comfort that the magistrate decided in one's favour: Judas would worry one to death with his devilish casuistry. And since spite cloaked with hypocrisy (and it was not even spite but rather a moral deadness) always inspires a kind of superstitious fear, the new neighbours—whom Judas suavely addressed as "dear neighbours"—timorously bowed down to the waist as they walked past the blood-

sucker, who stood by the coffin in deep mourning, with his hands folded in prayer and his eyes raised to heaven.

While the body remained in the house, the whole household walked about on tiptoe, shook their heads, whispered, and kept peeping into the dining-room, where the coffin stood on the table. Judas pretended to be at his last gasp, shuffled along the corridor, came in to have a look at the dear departed, shed a tear, straightened the pall, and whispered with the police superintendent, who was making the inventory and sealing up chests and cupboards. Petenka and Volodenka were busy round the coffin, putting up and lighting candles, holding the censer, etc. Aninka and Lubinka wept, and through their tears seconded the choristers in high-pitched little voices during the requiems. Women servants in black calico dresses wiped their noses, red with crying, on their aprons.

As soon as Pavel Vladimirich had passed away, Arina Petrovna withdrew into her room and locked herself in. She had no time for tears because she knew that she had to decide at once what she was to do. She had no intention of staying at Dubrovino . . . not for anything. Consequently the only thing that remained to her was to go to Pogorelka, the orphans' little estate—the "cut" she had once chucked to her disrespectful daughter.

Once her mind was made up, she felt relieved, as though Judas had suddenly and irrevocably lost all power over her. She calmly counted up her 5 per cent bonds (it appeared she had fifteen thousand rubles of her own and fifteen thousand that she had saved up for the orphans), and as calmly considered how much it would cost her to put the Pogorelka house in order. Then she immediately sent for the Pogorelka elder, gave the necessary orders about hiring carpenters and sending the carts to Dubrovino to fetch hers and the girls' luggage, told them to get the chaise ready (she had her *own* chaise at Dubrovino, and she had *proof* of her *ownership*), and started packing. She felt neither animosity nor affection towards Judas; she simply felt that she could not bear to have anything to do with him. She ate very little and without relish, because she now had to eat what belonged to Judas and not to Pavel. Porphyry Vladimirich looked into her room

more than once to have a chat with his "dear Mamma" (he understood very well that she was making ready to go, though he pretended not to notice it) but Arina Petrovna would not talk to him.

"Go along, dear, go along, I'm busy," she said.

In three days Arina Petrovna was quite ready to leave. They all went to Mass and attended the burial service. At the burial everything happened exactly as Arina Petrovna had pictured it on the morning of Judas's arrival at Dubrovino. "Good-bye, brother!" he cried when the coffin was being lowered into the grave just as she had thought he would, and then immediately turned to Ulita and said hastily:

"Be sure to take the frumenty back and put it on a nice clean table-cloth in the dining-room. We'll have to eat it in my brother's memory, you know."

Three priests (including the Father Superior) and the deacon had been invited to the dinner, which was served, as the custom is, as soon as they were back from the funeral. A table apart was set in the hall for the sextons. Arina Petrovna and the girls came to dinner in their travelling-clothes, but again Judas pretended not to notice it. Coming up to the hors-d'œuvres table, Porphyry Vladimirovich asked the Father Superior to bless the food and drink, then poured out a glass of vodka for each of the clergy and himself, and said in a voice ringing with emotion:

"Eternal memory to the deceased! Ah, brother, brother, you have left us! And who would have thought that you, of all people, would go and do such a thing. Oh, you bad, bad brother!"

He crossed himself and drank the vodka, then he crossed himself again and swallowed a bit of caviare, crossed himself again and took a piece of smoked salmon.

"Have some, Father," he begged the Father Superior. "It all comes from my dear brother's stores. The dear departed was fond of good fare. He liked his food, but he liked to treat others even more. Ah, brother, brother, you have forsaken us. Naughty, naughty brother!"

He was so carried away by his eloquence that he actually forgot all about his mother. He only thought of her when

he took a spoonful of pickled mushrooms and was about to send it the way of the salmon.

"Mamma! Dear heart!" he cried, startled. "Here I am, foolish me, stuffing myself—oh, what a sin! Mamma, have some caviare, some mushrooms. These are the famous Dubrovino mushrooms, you know!"

But Arina Petrovna merely nodded without speaking and did not stir. She seemed to be listening to something with curiosity. It was as though a light had suddenly broken upon everything before her, and all this comedy to the repetition of which she had been used from a child and in which she had herself always taken part now struck her as quite new, as something she had never witnessed before.

The dinner began with family altercations. Judas insisted that his mother should sit at the head of the table. Arina Petrovna refused.

"No, you are the master here, so you must sit where you want to," she said drily.

"You are the mistress. You, Mamma, are the mistress both at Golovlyovo and at Dubrovino—everywhere," Judas was persuading her.

"No, you sit there. If, God willing, I have a home of my own. I'll sit where I like without being asked. But here you are the master, so take the master's place!"

"I'll tell you what we'll do then," Judas said with feeling. "We'll leave the place empty. As though my brother were present here invisibly.... He is the host and we are his guests."

They did so. While soup was being served, Judas selected a suitable subject and engaged the priests in conversation, addressing himself chiefly to the Father Superior.

"You know there are many nowadays who do not believe in immortality... but I do," he said.

"Well, they are desperate characters, I expect," the Father Superior responded.

"No, not desperate characters, but there's a theory to that effect—that man is a law unto himself, you know.... He lives and lives—and suddenly he dies."

"There are much too many of these theories nowadays, it would do no harm to cut them down a bit. People

believe in theories and don't believe in God. Even the common folk want to be learned."

"Yes, Father, you are right. They certainly do want that. Take my neighbours at Naglovka, for instance; poor as church mice and yet they decided the other day to build a school in the village. Scholars, indeed!"

"There is a science for everything now. There's a science to give you rain and a science to bring fine weather. In the old days we went about it in our simple way: people would come and have a service sung, and God would grant them their wish. If fine weather was needed God sent fine weather; if rain was needed God had rain enough and to spare. God has plenty of everything. But since people took to science it has all come to an end, everything happens at the wrong season now. When it's sowing-time there's a drought, and when it's hay-making it rains."

"It's the holy truth, what you are saying, Father. In the old days, when people used to think of God more often, the earth yielded better harvests too. One reaped not as now, four- or fivefold what one has sown, but a hundredfold. I expect Mamma remembers those days. Do you, Mamma?" Judas turned to Arina Petrovna, trying to draw her into conversation.

"I haven't heard of such happenings in our parts. You were thinking of Canaan, perhaps; they did have such harvests there, they say," Arina Petrovna responded drily.

"Yes, yes, yes," Judas said, as if he had not heard his mother's remarks. "They don't believe in God, they don't admit immortality . . . but they want to eat all right."

"That's it—all they want is to stuff themselves with food and drink," the Father Superior agreed, turning up the sleeves of his cassock to help himself to a piece of pie.

Everyone began on soup; for a time the only sounds were the jingle of spoons and the snorting of the priests as they blew on the hot liquid.

"Or take the Roman Catholics now," Judas continued, putting down his spoon, "they don't deny immortality, yet they say that the soul does not go straight to hell or to heaven but finds itself for a time in a kind of in-between place."

"That, too, is groundless."

"I am not so sure, Father..." Porphyry Vladimirich replied thoughtfully. "Speaking from the point of view of..."

"It's no use speaking of idle fancies. How does the Holy Church pray? It prays that the soul may rest in a cool, green place where there is neither sorrow, nor lamentation. How can there be any 'in-between' place, then?"

Judas was not altogether convinced, however, and was just about to reply when Arina Petrovna, who had had enough of this conversation, cut him short.

"There, now, eat your soup, you theologian. I expect it's quite cold," she said, and, to change the subject, asked: "Have you harvested your rye, Father?"

"Yes, Madam, the rye is splendid this year, but the spring crop doesn't seem up to much. The oats hadn't filled out properly before they began flopping. There will be neither grain nor straw."

"Everyone is complaining about the oats this year."

Arina Petrovna sighed, watching Judas scoop out the last of the soup with his spoon.

The next course was served: ham and green peas. Judas took the opportunity to renew the interrupted conversation.

"Jews don't eat ham," he said.

"Jews are a heathen race," the Father Superior replied; "that's why people jeer at them."

"But Tatars don't eat pork either.... There must be some reason for it."

"Tatars are a heathen people too, that's the reason."

"We don't eat horseflesh, and Tatars look down on pork. They say that in Paris, during the siege, people ate rats."

"Oh well, that's the French."

Judas went on in this vein all through the dinner. When carp fried in sour cream was served, he said:

"Help yourself, Father. This carp is something special; my dear brother was very fond of it."

When asparagus was served, Judas said:

"Now, that's asparagus for you! In Petersburg one

would have to pay a silver ruble for it. My brother tended it himself. Just look how thick it is, bless it."

Arina Petrovna's heart was boiling within her: an hour had passed and they were only half-way through dinner. Judas seemed to dawdle on purpose; he would swallow a few mouthfuls and then put down his knife and fork and chatter, then tackle his food again, and again begin chatting. How often in the old days Arina Petrovna used to snap at him for this, "Get on with your dinner, you Satan, God forgive me for saying so!" but he had evidently forgotten his mother's admonitions, or perhaps he had not forgotten but was doing it on purpose, out of revenge, and perhaps it was not even a conscious revenge but just his spiteful nature. At last the game was served, but at the very moment when all stood up and the Father Deacon intoned the prayer for the deceased, there was a scuffle and shouting in the corridor that completely ruined the effect.

"What's this noise?" Porphiry Vladimirich cried, "this isn't a public house, you know."

"Don't shout, if you please. It's my . . . they are carrying out my boxes," Arina Petrovna said, and added with a touch of irony, "Would you like to inspect them?"

Silence fell suddenly, even Judas was at a loss and turned pale. It occurred to him immediately, however, that he must do something to cover up his mother's unpleasant remark, and turning to the Father Superior, he began:

"Take woodcock, for instance. In Russia there are lots of them, but in other countries. . . ."

"Get on with your dinner, for Christ's sake. We have over fifteen miles to drive, and we must hurry and make it before dark," Arina Petrovna interrupted him. "Petenka dear, do go and tell them to hurry with the pudding."

There was a silence of several minutes. Porphiry Vladimirich quickly finished his piece of woodcock and sat pale and with twitching lips, tapping the floor with his foot.

"You wound me, Mamma dear. You hurt me very much," he brought out at last, without looking at his mother however.

"You aren't the one to feel wounded, I should have thought. And how could I have hurt you so much?"

"I am very, very much hurt. . . . Very much indeed. How can you go away at such a moment! You have lived here all this time and all at once. . . . And then those boxes . . . and talking of inspection. . . . I'm very much hurt."

"If you really want to know, I can give you an answer. I lived here so long as my son Pavel was living; now he is dead and I am going away. And as to my boxes, Ulita has been spying on me for a long time at your orders. But I think it is better to tell your mother straight out that she is suspect rather than to hiss at her like a snake from behind another person's back."

"Mamma! My dear! Why, you . . . why, I. . ." Judas groaned.

"That will do," Arina Petrovna cut him short. "That's all I wanted to say."

"But, dear Mamma, in what way could I have. . . ."

"I tell you that's all—let's leave it at that. Let me go in peace, for Christ's sake. There's my carriage now."

Indeed there was the jingle of bells and the clatter of carriage wheels in the yard. Arina Petrovna was the first to get up from the table; the others got up too.

"Well, now let us sit down for a moment, and then we must be off,"* she said, going to the drawing-room.

They sat in silence for a few moments; Judas meanwhile recovered completely.

"Wouldn't you like to stay at Dubrovino a bit longer, Mamma? See how nice it is here," he said, looking at his mother ingratiatingly like a dog that knows it has done wrong.

"No, my dear, I have had enough of it. I don't want to say anything unpleasant to you at parting, but I cannot stay here. There's nothing to hold me here. Father, let us pray."

All stood up and said a prayer, then Arina Petrovna kissed and blessed everyone as good relatives do, and walked to the door treading heavily.

Porphiry Vladimirich, at the head of all the household,

* It is a Russian custom to sit down for a few minutes for good luck before setting off on a journey.—*Ed.*

accompanied her to the front steps, but when he saw the carriage he was possessed by the devil of cupidity. "It's Pavel's chaise, to be sure," the thought flashed through his mind.

"We shall be seeing each other, darling Mamma," he said, helping his mother into the carriage and casting sidelong glances at it.

"If it be God's will . . . why not."

"Ah, Mamma, Mamma, you are a naughty girl, you know. Tell them to unharness the horses and come back into your old nest, bless you . . . do come," Judas prattled cajolingly.

Arina Petrovna did not answer. She had quite settled in her place in the carriage and had already made the sign of the cross, but something was keeping the orphans.

Judas meanwhile kept glancing at the carriage.

"And what about the carriage, Mamma? Will you send it back, or would you like me to send someone to fetch it?" he could not contain himself any longer.

Arina Petrovna positively shook with indignation.

"The carriage is mine!" she cried in a voice so strained that everyone felt ashamed and discomfited. "Mine, mine! It's my carriage! I bought it. . . . I have proof . . . I have witnesses. And you . . . you . . . well, I'll wait and see . . . what you'll do next. Children, are you going to be much longer?"

"Why, Mamma, I don't mind. . . . Even if the carriage belonged to Dubrovino. . . ."

"It's my carriage! Mine! It doesn't belong here. Don't you dare to say it does, do you hear?"

"Certainly, Mamma. . . . Well, don't forget us, my dear. Come and see us without ceremony. We'll call on you and you call on us . . . like good relatives."

"Are you ready? Start off!" Arina Petrovna cried, hardly able to control herself.

The carriage jerked and drove away at a jogtrot. Judas stood on the steps waving his handkerchief, and so long as the carriage was in sight shouted after it:

"Like good relatives! We'll call on you and you call on us!"

FATHER AND SON

It had never entered Arina Petrovna's head that a moment might come when she would become nothing but an extra mouth to feed, and now this moment had stolen in upon her just when she realised for the first time in her life that her moral and physical strength was undermined. Such moments always come unexpectedly. A man's strength may have been giving way for some time, but he still bears up and stands firm when suddenly a last blow is dealt him from somewhere out of the blue. It is very difficult to foresee that blow and to understand that it is coming; one has simply to submit to it in silence, for it is the blow which instantly and irrevocably turns an active and energetic person into a complete wreck.

Arina Petrovna's position had been difficult enough when she broke with Judas and settled at Dubrovino, but then she knew at any rate that, although Pavel Vladimirovich was none too pleased at her invasion, he was a man of means and could well afford to keep her. Now the position was quite different. She was the head of a household where every mouthful counted. She knew what that meant for, having passed all her life in the country among the peasants, she understood perfectly how ruinous it was to have an extra mouth to feed when supplies were scarce.

And yet the first weeks after moving to Pogorelka she kept up her courage, busily settling in the new place, and her administrative insight was as clear as ever. But farming at Pogorelka meant fussing over every little detail and required constant personal supervision. At first Arina Petrovna thought rashly that it would be simple enough to keep strict account of farthings and pence which made up this household's income and expenses, but she soon had to

confess to herself that this was not so. It was simple enough, indeed, but she had neither the energy nor the eagerness of her former days. Besides, it was autumn, the busy time when the year's supplies were being gathered in, but the weather was bad and it could not but dampen Arina Petrovna's zeal. The infirmities of old age took their own and prevented her from going out; long dismal autumn evenings doomed her to idleness. The old woman was restless and worried, but there was nothing she could do about it.

She could not help noticing, too, that all was not well with her grand-daughters. They had suddenly grown bored and dejected. Some vague plans for the future disturbed them—plans in which the thought of work alternated with thoughts of pleasures, of the most innocent kind, of course. Memories of their boarding-school, odd bits of reading about devoting one's life to work, and a timid hope of using their school connections in order to find some way into the bright world of real human life—all this had a share in the shaping of those plans. Vague as they were, one definite, persistent thought dominated them—to escape at all costs from this hateful Pogorelka. And so one fine morning Anninka and Lubinka declared to their grandmother that they could not and would not stay at Pogorelka any longer; that this wasn't life at all, that they never saw anyone except the priest, who for some reason always talked to them about the virgins whose lamps had gone out, and altogether they simply couldn't go on like this! The young ladies spoke sharply because they were afraid of their grandmother, and, expecting her to flare up in anger and to oppose them, they assumed quite a truculent manner. But, to their surprise, Arina Petrovna heard out their complaints without any anger and did not even indulge in any of the useless moralising to which weak old age is so prone. Alas! she was no longer the domineering woman who used to say authoritatively, "I'll go to the Khotkov Convent and take the girls with me." The change in her was due not wholly to the weakness of old age but partly also to a dawning sense of justice. The last blows of fate had not only humbled her but had also thrown a light upon certain aspects

of her mental horizon on which her mind had apparently never dwelt before. She understood now that human beings had certain strivings which may lie dormant for a long time but which, once awakened, irresistibly drew one towards the blessed ray of light that one's eyes have long been watching for amidst the hopeless darkness of the present. Having once recognised the legitimacy of such a striving she could no longer oppose it. True, she did try to dissuade the girls, but she did it feebly, halfheartedly; she was anxious about their future, especially as she herself had no connections in so-called society, but at the same time she felt it was right and inevitable that they should part. What would become of them? The question haunted her mind every moment; but then neither this question nor even more alarming ones can hold back those who long for freedom. And the girls could talk of nothing but escaping from Pogorelka. And so after hesitating a little and putting off the day of departure out of consideration for their grandmother, they went away.

When they had gone the Pogorelka house seemed plunged into hopeless stillness. Self-centred as Arina Petrovna was by nature, she too knew the soothing effect of other people's nearness. When she had seen off her granddaughters she felt, perhaps for the first time in her life, that a part of her being had broken away, and that she gained all at once a freedom so limitless that there was nothing but a gaping void before her. To hide this emptiness from herself she immediately gave orders to board up the reception-rooms and the attic in which the girls had lived. "It will save firewood too," she thought. She kept only two rooms for herself, one of which had a large icon-stand in it and the other served her as a bedroom, study and dining-room. For the sake of economy she dismissed the servants, keeping only the housekeeper Afimyushka, who was so old she could hardly walk, and the one-eyed Markovna, a soldier's wife, who acted as cook and laundress. But all these measures were of little avail; the sensation of emptiness soon penetrated into the two rooms where she had thought she could find shelter from it. Helpless solitude and dismal idleness were the two hated companions she was henceforth doomed to spend

her old age with. Physical and moral disintegration was not long in coming, all the more relentless because a life of idleness has no resistance to offer it.

Day followed day with the depressing monotony so characteristic of country life if it is provided with neither material comfort, nor food for the intellect, nor work. Apart from the external causes that made personal supervision on the farm impossible for Arina Petrovna, she felt an inner revulsion against the petty cares that fell to her lot at the end of her life. She might perhaps have overcome her aversion had she had a purpose that would make her efforts worthwhile—but that was just the point, she had no such purpose. Everyone was sick and tired of her, and she was sick and tired of everyone. Her former feverish activity suddenly gave way to drowsy idleness, and the idleness gradually demoralised her will, and developed in her inclinations she had not dreamt of a few months before. The strong and self-possessed woman whom no one would have dared to call old had suddenly become a wreck for whom there was neither past nor future, but only the present moment that had to be lived through.

She spent the greater part of the day dozing. She would sit down in her armchair in front of the table on which her grimy cards were laid out, and doze. Then she would wake up with a start, glance at the window, and without any conscious thought in her mind, gaze for a long while at the wide expanse of fields stretching into the distance as far as the eye could see. Pogorelka was a sad-looking place. It was situated awkwardly, it had no garden, no shade, no claims to comfort whatever. There was not even a front garden. The house had only one storey; it seemed crushed down to the ground, and had darkened from age and exposure to all weathers. The few outbuildings behind it also showed signs of decay; and all round it lay fields, endless fields, with not a tree to be seen on the horizon. But as Arina Petrovna had lived all her life in the country, hardly ever leaving it, this poor scenery did not seem dismal to her, but rather appealed to her heart, stirring the remains of feeling that still smouldered in it. The best part of her being lived in those bare, boundless fields, and her eyes instinctively turned to them

at every moment. She looked intently into the distance, gazing at the villages soaked with rain that showed like black specks on the horizon, at the white churches in the village graveyards, at the coloured patches of shadow cast on the plain by the wandering clouds pierced by the sunbeams, at a peasant walking between the furrows, whereas it seemed to her that he never moved at all. But all this while she was not thinking of anything or, rather, her thoughts were so disconnected that they could dwell on nothing for any length of time. She merely gazed and gazed until the drowsiness of old age began to ring in her ears again, and a mist veiled the fields, the churches, the villages, and the peasant walking far away.

Sometimes she seemed to be recalling the past, but it came before her disconnectedly, in fragments. She could not concentrate her attention, and it wandered from one distant recollection to another. At times, however, some memory struck her deeply, not a joyful memory—there had been cruelly little joy in her life—but the thought of some bitter, unendurable injury. Then something seemed to blaze up within her, anguish crept into her heart and tears came into her eyes. She began to weep bitterly and painfully, shedding the tears of pitiful old age that seem to be caused by a lingering nightmare. But while her tears still flowed her unconscious thought went on wandering, imperceptibly leading her away from the source of her sadness, so that after a few minutes the old woman asked herself in surprise what could have been happening to her.

She lived without taking any personal part in life, so to speak—lived simply in virtue of some forgotten anchor lines that lay hidden in the wreck and had to be gathered up, checked and summed up. While those lines were still there, life went on its wonted way, compelling her to go through the actions necessary to keep the ruin from crumbling into dust.

But while her days were spent in unconscious drowsiness, her nights were positively tormenting. At night Arina Petrovna *was afraid*, afraid of thieves, of ghosts, of devils—in short, of everything that her life and education had taught her to fear. There was but little defence against it

all, because, except for the two old servants already mentioned, the whole night staff of Pogorelka consisted of a lame peasant Fedoseyushka, who, for two rubles a month, came from the village in the evenings to keep watch over Arina Petrovna's house and generally dozed in the hall, going out at appointed hours to tap his sheet of iron. Several workmen and women lived by the cattle yard, but that was some hundred feet from the house, and it was by no means easy to summon anyone from there.

There is something dreary and depressing about a sleepless night in the country. At nine or at the very most at ten o'clock all life seems to cease and an awe-inspiring stillness sets in. There is nothing to do, it is a waste to burn the candles, so there is nothing for it but to go to bed. As soon as the samovar and the tea things had been taken away Afimyushka, from habit acquired in the times of serfdom, spread a felt mat before the door leading to her mistress's bedroom; she scratched herself and yawned, lay down on the mat and was instantly dead to the world. Markovna was busy in the maids' room a little longer, muttering to herself and abusing someone, but at last she too had finished, and a minute later could be heard snoring and talking in her sleep. The night-watchman rattled his clapper to make his presence known, and no more was heard of him for hours. Arina Petrovna sat before a guttered tallow candle, trying to keep herself awake by playing patience, but the minute she laid out the cards drowsiness overwhelmed her. "I might set the place on fire in my sleep!" she said to herself, deciding to go to bed. But the moment she sank into the feather bed another trouble was upon her: the sleep that she had barely managed to ward off all the evening suddenly forsook her altogether. The room was overheated, warm air poured in from the stove, and the feather bed made her intolerably hot. Arina Petrovna lay tossing and turning. She wanted to call someone but she knew that no one would come. Mysterious silence reigned around—a silence in which a straining ear could distinguish any number of sounds. There was a bang somewhere, or a sudden howl, or someone seemed to walk down the passage, or a breath of wind passed suddenly through the room, actually touching her



face. The sanctuary lamp was burning before the icon and its light gave a deceptive appearance to everything, as if the objects in the room were not objects at all but merely outlines of themselves. In addition to this uncertain light there was another, coming from the open door of the adjoining room where four or five sanctuary lamps were burning before the icon-stand. That light lay on the floor in a yellow rectangle, cutting into the semidarkness of the bedroom and not mingling with it. Silently moving, flickering shadows were everywhere. A mouse scratched behind the wallpaper. "Shh! you wretch!" Arina Petrovna called—and all would be quiet again. Again there would be shadows, again a whispering that came from nowhere. She passed most of the night in wakeful, uneasy drowsiness and only towards morning fell into a sound sleep. And at six o'clock Arina Petrovna was on her feet again, worn out by the sleepless night.

In addition to all this, sufficient in itself, two more causes aggravated Arina Petrovna's pitiful existence: scantiness of food and lack of comfort in her rooms. She ate little and badly, probably trying to make up in this way for the losses due to her inadequate management. As for the lack of comfort the Pogorelka house was old and damp, the room in which Arina Petrovna had shut herself up was never aired and was not swept or dusted for weeks on end. Completely helpless, deprived of every comfort and attention, she was gradually sinking into decrepitude.

But the more decrepit she grew, the more she wished to live; or, rather, it was not so much that she wished to live as that she wanted to "have a bit of pleasure" and had no thought of death whatever. She had been afraid of death before, but now she seemed to have completely forgotten about it. And since her ideal of life differed but little from that of any peasant, the conception of "good living" that lured her was not of too lofty a character. Everything that she had denied herself in the course of her life—good food, rest, other people's society—became an object towards which all her thoughts were now directed. All the characteristics of a typical hanger-on—gluttony, love of idle talk and obsequiousness for the sake of

a favour—developed in her with astonishing rapidity.

She lived on the servants' cabbage soup with old salt meat, and kept dreaming of the Golovlyovo stores, of the carp that bred in the Dubrovino ponds, of the mushrooms that grew in plenty in the Golovlyovo woods, of the fowls that were fattened in the Golovlyovo farmyard. "It would be lovely to have some soup with goose giblets or mushrooms fried in sour cream," the thought flashed through her mind so vividly that it made her mouth twitch. At night she tossed and turned, her heart sinking with fear at every rustle, and thought: "At Golovlyovo now the bolts are fast, and the watchmen can be trusted, they rattle their clappers all night through—one can sleep as in Christ's bosom!" In the daytime she would have no one to speak to for hours, and during that enforced silence the thought crept of itself into her mind: "At Golovlyovo there are plenty of people, one can talk to one's heart's content!" In short, she kept recalling Golovlyovo every moment, and as she did so it became a sort of paradise, the embodiment of "good living".

As her imagination succumbed more and more often to the memories of Golovlyovo, her will grew weaker and the bitter injuries of the recent past receded further and further away. Owing to her upbringing and the whole setting of her life, the Russian woman resigns herself much too easily to the part of a dependant, and Arina Petrovna did not escape that fate either, although one would have thought her past ought to have been a warning and a safeguard to her. Had she not made a mistake "at that time", dividing the property between her sons and trusting Judas, she would have to this moment remained a querulous and exacting old woman whose children would be compelled to bow to her will. But since the mistake was irretrievable, the transition from the querulousness of an arbitrary autocrat to the submissiveness of an ingratiating dependant was merely a question of time. So long as some of her former strength remained, the transition did not express itself outwardly; but as soon as she perceived that she was irrevocably condemned to helplessness and solitude, all kinds of cowardly impulses crept into her heart and little by little completely demoralised

her will that had been weakened already. Judas, who on his early visits to Pogorelka had met with an extremely cold reception, suddenly ceased to be hateful to her. The old injuries were unconsciously forgotten, and Arina Petrovna made the first step towards reconciliation.

It began with cadging. Messengers from Pogorelka, few and far between at first, now started coming to Judas more and more often. It was either that there were no mushrooms at Pogorelka, or that the cucumbers were spotted because of the rain, or that the turkeys died "what with this freedom", "and you might, dear friend, tell them to catch some carp for me at Dubrovino, which the late Pavel never refused his old mother". Judas scowled but did not venture openly to express his annoyance. He was sorry to give the carp away but he was afraid above all things that his mother might curse him. He remembered her saying once, "I'll come to Golovlyovo, tell them to open the church, call the priest and cry, 'I curse you for ever!'"—and this memory restrained him from many of the nasty tricks at which he was a great hand. But, carrying out the wishes of his darling Mamma, he nevertheless hinted to his household that every man had a cross to bear laid upon him by Providence and that there was a purpose in this, for if he had no cross to bear, Man forgot himself and fell into evil ways.

To his mother he wrote as follows:

"I am sending you as many cucumbers as I can, darling Mamma, but as to turkeys, with the exception of those that are being kept for stock, we have nothing but cocks which would be of no use to you because of their great size and the modesty of your requirements. But perhaps you will do me the favour of coming to Golovlyovo to partake of my frugal fare. We will then have one of those idle creatures roasted (idle they are because my cook Matvei caponises them very cleverly), and we will both have a treat, precious friend Mamma."

Since then Arina Petrovna became a frequent visitor at Golovlyovo. She ate turkeys and ducks with Judas, slept to her heart's content, both at night and after dinner, and indulged in endless conversations about nothing in particular, to which Judas was prone by nature and she

through old age. She did not give up her visits even when the rumour reached her that Judas, tired of being a widower, had taken for housekeeper a sexton's daughter called Yevpraxeya. On the contrary, when she heard of this she immediately set out for Golovlyovo, and without waiting to step out of the carriage, called to Judas with childish impatience, "Well, well, you old sinner! Show me your beauty, show her!" She enjoyed herself thoroughly that day, because Yevpraxeya herself waited on her at the table, made up the bed for her after dinner, and in the evening the three of them played cards. Judas too was pleased at this turn of events—and as a sign of filial gratitude had a pound of caviare among other things put into Arina Petrovna's chaise as she was going home; this was the highest token of respect, for caviare was not home produce but a bought article. The old woman was so touched that she could not resist saying:

"Thank you very much indeed. God will love you, my dear, for being so good to your mother in her old age. At least I shall not be dull now when I return to Pogorelka. I have always been fond of caviare, and now I shall have a treat, thanks to you!"

Five years had passed since Arina Petrovna moved to Pogorelka. Judas, having once settled on his family estate, never left it. He had grown considerably older, and looked faded and grey, but he cheated, lied, and talked twaddle more than ever because he had his "darling Mamma" almost always with him now—a faithful listener for the sake of creature comforts in her old age.

It must not be imagined that Judas was a hypocrite in the same sense as Tartuffe or any modern French bourgeois who goes off into flights of eloquence on the subject of social morality. No, he was a hypocrite of a purely Russian brand, that is, simply a man devoid of moral standards, knowing no truth other than the copy-book precepts. He was pettifogging, deceitful, loquacious, boundlessly ignorant, and, to top it all, he believed in and feared the supernatural. All these characteristics are so negative that they can supply no stable material for real hypocrisy.

In France, hypocrisy is the product of a man's upbringing; it is a component of "good manners", so to speak, and almost always has a distinct political or social colouring. There are religious hypocrites, social morality hypocrites—men who preach on the subject of property, family, state, and even, of recent years, on the subject of "order". If this kind of hypocrisy cannot be described as a conviction, it is in any case a banner around which men who find it profitable to be hypocritical in this rather than in some other way can rally. They are conscious hypocrites, that is, they know it themselves and are aware that other people know it too. For a French bourgeois the universe is nothing but a large theatre in which an endless play is being enacted with one hypocrite giving his cue to another.

Hypocrisy sets a standard of propriety, of decorum, of good appearance, and, most important of all, hypocrisy acts as a bridle—not of course for those who practise it at the top of the social ladder but for those who, without any hypocrisy, throng the bottom of the social cauldron. Hypocrisy restrains society from unbridled passions, making the latter a privilege of a very small minority. So long as moral laxity is confined to a small and well-organised group, it is not merely safe but actually helps to maintain and foster the traditions of elegance. Elegance would perish if there did not exist a certain number of *cabinets particuliers* where it could be cultivated at moments free from the cult of official hypocrisy.

But moral laxity becomes positively dangerous once it is made permissible for all and is coupled with liberty for everyone to put forward his claims and to prove that they are both natural and legitimate. When this happens new social strata are formed which seek either to replace the old or considerably to limit them. The demand for *cabinets particuliers* increases so much that at last the question arises whether it would not be simpler in the future to do without them altogether.

And it is against these undesirable questions and complications that the French ruling classes guard themselves by means of systematic hypocrisy which does not

remain merely a matter of custom but acquires a legal character, and from a social habit develops into a binding law.

The whole of the modern French theatre is, with a few exceptions, founded upon this law of respect for hypocrisy. The leading characters in the best French plays, that is, in those which enjoy the greatest popularity merely because of the extremely realistic way they represent the nasty side of life, invariably save up a few moments at the end in order to camouflage the nastiness with some grandiloquent phrases, glorifying the sweetness and holiness of virtue. In the course of four acts Adèle may defile her conjugal bed in every possible way, but in the fifth she is sure to declare for all to hear that the family hearth is the only refuge in which the Frenchwoman can find happiness. Ask yourself, what would happen to Adèle if the authors made the play go on for another five acts—and you may answer with perfect certainty that in the course of the next four acts Adèle would again defile her conjugal bed, and in the fifth again address the audience with the same statement. In fact there is no need to make any conjectures—it is enough to go from the Théâtre Français to the Gymnase and from there to the Variétés or the Vaudeville to convince oneself that Adèle everywhere defiles her conjugal bed and everywhere ends by declaring that same bed to be the only altar at which any honourable Frenchwoman can officiate. This is so ingrained in the national mind that no one even notices that this is a grossly stupid contradiction or sees that truth goes hand in hand with hypocrisy, and the two are so intermingled that it is hard to say which has a greater claim to recognition.

We Russians have no strongly biased systems of education. We are not drilled, we are not trained to be the champions and disseminators of this or that system of social morality but are simply allowed to grow as nettles grow by a fence. That is why there are very few hypocrites among us and very many liars, bigots, and babblers. We have no need to be hypocritical for the sake of any fundamental social principles, for we have no such principles and do not use any one of them as a screen.

We exist quite freely, i.e., we vegetate, babble, and lie spontaneously, without any principles.

Whether this is a thing to regret or applaud is not for me to say. I think, however, that while hypocrisy may arouse fear and indignation, aimless lying brings with it boredom and disgust. And so the best thing is not to discuss the advantages or disadvantages of conscious and unconscious hypocrisy, but to keep away from both hypocrites and liars.

And so Porphyry was a sneaky cad, a liar and a twaddler rather than a hypocrite. When he shut himself up in the country he found freedom for his instincts, for nowhere else, in no other sphere of life, could they have had such free play as there. At Golovlyovo, he never even encountered any indirect hindrance, let alone any direct opposition, which might make him think: "I should love to play some shabby trick but I am ashamed before other people!" No one's judgement disturbed him, no indiscreet glance troubled him, and so he had no occasion to question his own conduct. Utter slackness became predominant in his attitude towards himself. Complete freedom from any moral restraints had attracted him for years, and the only reason why he had not moved to the country earlier was that he was afraid of idleness. Having spent more than thirty years in the dull atmosphere of a government office, he had acquired all the habits and instincts of a typical bureaucrat who cannot bear to have a single minute of his life unoccupied with trivialities. But on studying the matter more carefully he came to the conclusion that the world of bureaucratic busy idling was so mobile that it could easily be transferred to any sphere one liked. And indeed as soon as he settled at Golovlyovo he immediately invented for himself such a store of futile occupations that he might potter in them for ever without the least danger of ever exhausting the supply. In the morning he sat down to his writing-table and set to work; he began by checking the accounts of the dairymaid, the housekeeper and the bailiff first by one method, then by another. He had also started a very complicated system of book-keeping, both for money and for goods; he entered every farthing and every article

in twenty books and reckoned it all up, now losing half a farthing, now making a whole farthing too much. Finally he took up his pen and wrote complaints to the Justice of Peace and to the Peace Mediator.* All this did not leave him a moment to spare and had indeed all the appearance of assiduous, exhausting work. Judas complained not of idleness, but of not having time to do all there was to be done, though he slaved at it all day in his study, wearing his dressing-gown from morning till night. Bundles of accounts carefully filed but not checked were always lying about on his desk, including a whole year's accounts from the dairymaid Fyokla; her doings had struck him from the first as suspicious, but he could never find a free moment to go into the matter.

He had severed every connection with the outside world. He received no books, no newspapers, no letters. One of his sons, Volodenka, had committed suicide; to his other son, Petenka, he wrote very little, and only when he sent him money. A dense fog of ignorance, superstition and futile fussiness surrounded him, but he did not feel the slightest desire to escape from it. He learned from the police superintendent that Napoleon III was no longer emperor a whole year after he had died; but even then he did not evince any special interest in the news and merely crossed himself, whispering, "God rest his soul," and said:

"And how proud he used to be! Goodness gracious me! This wasn't right for him and that wasn't the thing! Tsars came to pay him respect, princes waited on him! And behold, the Lord went and confounded all his fancies in one moment!"

Strictly speaking, he did not even know what was going on on his estate, though he did nothing but cast up figures and keep accounts from morning till night. In this respect he had all the characteristics of a typical bureaucrat. Imagine a government official to whom his chief might say in a merry moment, "Dear friend, it is

* *Peace Mediator*—an elective office established after the abolition of serfdom to settle disputes between landowners and peasants. Landowners were mostly elected to this office.—*Ed.*

essential for my plans that I should know how many potatoes a year can be grown in Russia—so please make the necessary calculations!" Would the man be puzzled by such a question? Would he, at least, ponder about the method he should follow in his inquiry? Not he. He would do the following simple thing: taking a map of Russia he would divide it into perfectly equal squares, find out how many acres were in each square, then ask at the nearest greengrocery how many potatoes were required to plant an acre of ground and what the *average crop* was, and then, with God's help and by means of the four rules of arithmetic, he would get the answer that *under favourable conditions* Russia could grow so many potatoes and *under unfavourable* so many. And his work would quite satisfy his chief, and, moreover, would no doubt be printed in the hundred-and-second volume of some *Proceedings*.

The housekeeper Judas had selected was just the type to fit into the life he had made for himself. Yevpraxeya was the daughter of the sexton at St. Nicholas's Church and was in every way a perfect treasure. She was neither clever nor resourceful, nor even efficient, but, to make up for it, she was meek, hard-working, and made no demands whatever. Even after he had "admitted her to him" she merely asked whether she might have a drink of cold kvass without his permission if she were thirsty. Even Judas was touched by her modesty, and in addition to kvass instantly gave her two barrels of pickled apples to help herself to without giving him any account on that score. A lover of beauty would have found nothing specially attractive about her appearance, but it was entirely satisfactory to a man who was not too particular and knew what he wanted. Her broad fair-skinned face with a narrow forehead was framed in thin yellowish hair, she had large, dull eyes, a perfectly straight nose, and a shapeless mouth, touched with that mysterious elusive smile that one finds on portraits painted by home-grown artists. Altogether there was nothing remarkable about her, except, perhaps, her back, which was so broad and powerful that the least susceptible man instinctively raised his hand to "give her one"

between the shoulder-blades. She knew this and did not object, so that when Judas patted her for the first time on her fat neck she merely jerked her shoulders.

In those bleak surroundings day followed day, one exactly like the other, without any change or hope of anything fresh and new. Arina Petrovna's visits alone somewhat enlivened Judas's existence, and it is only fair to say that, if at first he frowned at the sight of his mother's approaching carriage, in time he grew accustomed to her visits and indeed came to like them. They satisfied his passion for empty talk; he managed to indulge in it even when by himself, apropos of various bills and accounts, but to talk twaddle with his darling Mamma was far more pleasant. When they met they talked from morning till night and were never weary of it. They spoke of everything: of what the crops used to be in the old days and what they were now; of how the landowners used to live before and how they were living at present; of pickled cucumbers not being the same as they used to be—perhaps because salt was better in the old days.

The advantage of these conversations was that they flowed like water and were easily forgotten; consequently they could be renewed endlessly with as much interest as though they were brand-new.

Yevpraxeya sat with them while they talked; Arina Petrovna had grown so fond of her that she could not bear her out of her sight. Sometimes, tired of talking, all three sat down to play cards, and sat till late at night playing "fools". They had tried to teach Yevpraxeya dummy-whist, but she could not understand it. The huge Golovlyovo house seemed to come to life on such evenings. Lights showed in all the windows, shadows flitted to and fro, so that a passer-by might think there was some extraordinary merry-making going on. Tea, coffee, and things to eat never left the table all day long. Arina Petrovna's heart grew merry and rejoiced within her, and she stayed on for three or four days instead of one. And already on her way back to Pogorelka she was busy inventing a pretext to return as soon as possible to the lure of Golovlyovo's "good living"

It is the end of November; the earth is covered with a white shroud as far as the eye can see. It is night, and a snow-storm is raging; a sharp, cold wind whips up the snow, instantly heaping it up in mounds and, lashing at everything that comes its way, fills the air with a terrifying howling. The village, the church, the nearest forest—all have disappeared in the whirling clouds of snow; the trees in the old Golovlyovo garden raise a mighty drone. But in the house it is warm, light and cosy. A samovar stands on the dining-table and Arina Petrovna, Judas and Yevpraxeya are sitting round it. A card-table with some shabby cards on it stands close by. The open doors of the dining-room lead to the icon-room on one side, all ablaze with the lights of the sanctuary lamps, and on the other to the master's study, in which there is also a lamp burning before an icon. The stuffy, overheated rooms smell of lamp oil and charcoal fumes from the samovar. Yevpraxeya, sitting in front of the samovar, washes the cups and wipes them with a linen dish towel. The samovar is humming away; one moment it roars with all its might and the next seems to drop asleep, snoring shrilly. Clouds of steam escape from under the lid, enveloping the teapot that has been standing on the top of the funnel for the last fifteen minutes. The three are engaged in conversation.

"Tell me now, how many times have you been made a 'fool' today?" Arina Petrovna asks Yevpraxeya.

"I wouldn't have been a 'fool' at all, had I not given in. It's for your pleasure I do it," Yevpraxeya answers.

"Fiddlesticks! I saw what pleasure you felt when I kept dealing you three or five cards at a time. I am not like Porphiry Vladimirich, you know; he spoils you and deals you only one card at a time, but there's no reason why I should do it, my dear."

"I'd hardly expect you to cheat too!"

"Now that's a thing I never do."

"Whom then did I catch at it? Who wanted to pair off a seven of clubs with an eight of hearts? I saw that myself, you know; I caught you doing it!"

Saying this Yevpraxeya stands up to take the teapot off the samovar and turns her back to Arina Petrovna.

"My, what a back you have . . . bless you!" Arina Petrovna says involuntarily.

"Yes, her back certainly is..." Judas answers mechanically.

"Always talking of my back . . . shame on you! And what is my back to you?"

Yevpraxeya looks right and left and smiles. Her back is her great asset. That morning even the old cook Save-lyich was lost in the contemplation of it, and said, "What a back! It's a regular slab!" And she did not complain of him to Porphyry Vladimirich.

Tea is poured out and the samovar begins to quiet down.

The snow-storm meanwhile is growing ever fiercer, now striking the windows with a whole avalanche of snow, now sending up an indescribable wail in the chimney.

"The snow-storm is in good earnest," Arina Petrovna remarks. "Howling and wailing away!"

"Well, let it. It's howling out there, and here we are drinking tea—so that's how it is, Mamma dear!" Porphyry Vladimirich responds.

"It must be dreadful to be caught in the open by this sort of visitation!"

"It may be dreadful for some, but we have nothing to worry about. Others may be out in the dark and the cold but we are warm and snug indoors. We sit here drinking tea with a bit of sugar and a little cream or a slice of lemon. And if we want a drop of rum in it, we can have that too."

"Yes, but if now. . . ."

"One moment, Mamma. As I was saying: it's very bad in the open now. No road, no path showing—all swept with snow. And there are wolves too. But here with us it is light and cosy, and we are not afraid of anything. We sit here as snug as can be, in peace and quiet. If we want to have a little game of cards, we can have it; if we want a spot of tea, we can have that too. We won't drink more than we need, but we'll drink just as much as we want. And why is this? It is because God is kind to us, Mamma dear. If it had not been for Him, for the King of Heaven, we, too, might be wandering about the

fields now, in the cold and the dark, dressed in some wretched old jerkin tied with a shabby belt, with bast shoes on our feet."

"Bast shoes, indeed! After all, we are gentlefolk! We wear boots, such as they are."

"But do you know, Mamma, why we are gentlefolk? That too is because God is kind to us. If it hadn't been for Him we would be sitting in a peasant hut now, with a lighted splinter instead of a pretty white candle, and as for a bit of tea or coffee—we'd never even dream of that! I'd sit there plaiting bast shoes, you'd be warming up some watery cabbage soup for supper, and Yevpraxeya would be weaving. . . . And perhaps, to make things worse, the foreman would come and tell me to turn out with my cart and horse. . . ."

"Oh, no foreman would send you out in such weather!"

"There's no telling, Mamma dear! And what if it were needed for the army? Maybe there is a war on or a revolution somewhere, and the soldiers have to be at the place in time! The police superintendent told me the other day that Napoleon III was dead.* So I expect the French will be at their tricks now! Of course our people will come forward too, and so 'Come along, peasant, out with cart and horse!' They won't care if it's cold or snowing or if there's no road; the peasant must go if he is told to! But they would spare people like you and me, and not send us out."

"There's no doubt of it, God is merciful to us."

"That's just what I'm saying! God is everything, Mamma. He gives us firewood for warmth, and provisions for food—it's all God. We fancy that it's all our own doing, buying things with our money, but if we look at it and consider, we see it is all from Him, all from God. And if it were not His will, we should have nothing at all. I shouldn't mind a sweet little orange now, for instance; I should have one myself and treat my darling Mamma to

* 1873. Consequently, the events described here took place in 1874. It is an interesting point that in one of his letters to I. Goncharov Shchedrin compared Porphyry Golovlyov to Napoleon III whom he also called a "soulless" man.—*Ed.*

one, and give one to everybody, and I have the money to buy the oranges—I have only to take it out of my pocket and say, 'Give me the oranges!' But God says, 'Whoa!' and here I am—in a sad plight with no oranges in sight!"

They all laugh.

"It's all very well," Yevpraxeya remarks, "but an uncle of mine was sexton at Pesochnoye, ever such a pious man he was—you'd think God might have done something for him, but one night he was out in the snow-storm and froze to death just the same."

"That's just what I am saying. If God wills it, a man will freeze, and if He doesn't, he will remain alive. And about prayer too; you see, some prayers are pleasing to God and some are not. Those that are come to His ears, and the others may just as soon be left unsaid. Perhaps your uncle's prayers were not pleasing to God—and so they had no effect."

"I remember in '24 I went to Moscow—I was heavy with Pavel then—I went there in December. . . ."

"Allow me, Mamma. I will just finish about prayer. A man prays for everything, because he needs all sorts of things. He needs sweet fresh butter, and good crisp cabbage, and nice little cucumbers—everything, in fact. Sometimes in his weakness he asks even for things he doesn't need. But from on high God can see better. You ask Him for butter, and He gives you a bit of cabbage or onions; you are praying for a spell of dry and warm weather, and He sends you rain and hail. And we must understand this and not repine. Last September, now, we kept asking God for frost to save winter crops from rotting, but He wouldn't give us frost—and our crops rotted, sure enough!"

"That they did!" Arina Petrovna echoes sympathetically. "At Novinki the peasants' winter crop is simply done for. They'll have to plough the land again and sow in the spring."

"That's just it! We try to be clever and cunning, we plan to do this and that, and with one stroke, in a flash, God turns all our plans and considerations into dust. You were going to tell us something that happened to you in '24, Mamma?"

"Was I? I've forgotten! I believe it was also about the same thing—about God's mercy. I can't think what it was, my dear."

"Well, God willing, you will think of it some other time. And while it's rumbling and grumbling outside, have a bit of jam, Mamma dear. These are Golovlyovo cherries! Yevpraxeya made the jam herself."

"I am having some. To tell the truth, cherries are a rare treat for me nowadays. In the old days I could have them often enough, but now.... You have fine cherries at Golovlyovo, big and juicy. At Dubrovino, do what they would, the cherries were never sweet enough. You did put some French vodka into the jam, didn't you, Yevpraxeya?"

"To be sure! I did it all just as you told me. And I meant to ask you, when you pickle cucumbers, do you put any cardamon in?"

Arina Petrovna thinks the matter over and says in a puzzled manner: "I don't remember, my dear. I believe I did put it in. I don't now—my pickling is nothing to speak of nowadays. But I used to put it in.... Yes, I remember very well I did. When I come home I'll search among my recipes and perhaps I'll find it. When I was strong, you know, I took notice of everything—wrote it all down. If I liked something that other people had, I at once asked for the recipe, took it down and tried it when I came home. I once found out a secret, such a secret—the man refused to part with it for a thousand rubles, do what you would! But I gave twenty-five kopeks to his housekeeper and she told me the whole thing!"

"Yes, Mamma, you were a true statesman in your day!"

"I don't know about being a statesman, but one thing I know: I did not squander what I had, thank God, but added to it. And here I am eating the fruits of my labour. It was I, you know, who planted the cherries at Golovlyovo!"

"And I thank you for it, Mamma, thank you very much. Eternal gratitude both for myself and for our descendants—there!"

Judas gets up and kisses Mamma's hand.

"And I thank you too for looking after your mother's comfort! Yes, you have fine provisions, very fine!"

"Oh, my provisions are nothing to speak of. Now, yours in the old days, those were provisions indeed! Think of all the cellars you had—and not an empty corner in them!"

"I had good stores sure enough, I wouldn't be lying if I said I've never been a bad housekeeper. And as for the cellars being so many, the whole thing was on a bigger scale then, we had ten times as many mouths to feed as now. Take the house servants alone—we had to provide for everyone and to feed them all. Cucumbers for one, kvass for another—each had a little and yet it mounted up to a lot altogether."

"Yes, those were the good days and there was plenty of everything then. Grain and fruit—all grew abundantly."

"They manured the ground better, that's why."

"No, Mamma, it wasn't that. It was God's grace, that's why. I remember Papa brought an apple from the garden one day and everyone marvelled—it was so big a plate couldn't hold it."

"I can't say I remember that. I know we had good apples, but I don't remember any being the size of a plate. The story of them catching a twenty-pound carp at Dubrovino on Coronation Day—that's true enough."

"Carp and fruit too—all was large then. I remember Ivan the gardener used to grow water-melons that big!"

Judas thrusts out his arms and pretends he cannot make them meet round the imaginary water-melon.

"Yes, water-melons too. I must say, though, water-melons differ from year to year, my dear. Some years they are plentiful and very good; other years they are few and not tasty, and sometimes there aren't any at all! And there's another thing—fruit doesn't grow everywhere the same. At Khlebnikovo, for instance, Grigory Alexandrich could never grow anything—no berries, no apples,

no fruit, in fact nothing except melons. But my! what melons!"

"That means he had God's blessing for melons!"

"Why, of course. Without God's blessing there's no doing anything. There's no getting away from that."

Arina Petrovna has drunk two cups of tea and now keeps glancing at the card-table. Yevpraxeya too is simply burning with impatience to have a go at "fools". But these plans are upset by Arina Petrovna herself, because she suddenly remembers something.

"I have a piece of news for you, you know," she declares. "I received a letter from the orphans yesterday."

"So after all this silence they have sent you word at last! They must have been hard put to it; I expect they are asking for money?"

"No, they aren't. Here, what do you think of that?"

Arina Petrovna pulls a letter out of her pocket and gives it to Judas, who reads as follows:

"Don't send us any more fowls or turkeys, Grand-mamma. Don't send us any money either, but put it in the bank. We are not in Moscow now, but in Kharkov; we have gone on the stage, and in the summer we will tour the fairs. I, Anninka, made my first appearance in *Perichole* and Lubinka in *Pansies*. I was called several times, especially after the scene when *Perichole* comes out slightly tipsy and sings, 'I am re-a-dy, I am ready, I am re-a-a-a-dy.' Lubinka too was a great success. The manager pays me a hundred rubles a month, and I am to have the benefits of one performance in Kharkov, and Lubinka receives seventy-five rubles a month and the benefits of a summer performance at the fair. Besides that, we get presents from officers and lawyers. True, lawyers are known to give forged notes sometimes, so one must be careful. Dear Grandmamma, use everything you like at Pogorelka, and we will never go back there and simply cannot understand how anyone can live there. Yesterday we had the first snow and we went driving in troikas with two lawyers here; one looks just like

Plevako*—a heavenly-looking man! He put a glass of champagne on the top of his head and danced the *trepak*—it was lovely, such fun! The other is not much to look at, rather like Yazikov* in Petersburg. Would you believe it, he has so upset his imagination with reading *The Collection of Best Russian Romances and Folk Songs* and has grown so nervy that he faints in the law-courts. We spend almost every day in this way with either lawyers or officers. We go for drives, have dinners and suppers in the best restaurants and don't pay for anything. Don't save up anything for us, Grandmamma, and help yourself to all there is—bread, and chickens and mushrooms. We wouldn't mind if the capital too. . . .

"Good-bye! Our friends have come—they want us to go for a drive again. Good-bye! You sweetie! You pet!

"Anninka.

"And I too—Lubinka."

"Ugh!" Judas spits with disgust, returning Arina Petrovna the letter.

She sits lost in thought and says nothing for a few minutes.

"You haven't answered them yet, Mamma, have you?"

"Not yet, the letter only arrived yesterday, and I came to you on purpose to show it to you, and what with one thing and another, I had almost forgotten it!"

"Don't answer them. Better not."

"But how can I do that? I have to account to them for the estate. Pogorelka is theirs, you know."

Judas grows thoughtful too; some sinister plan flashes through his mind.

"What troubles me is how they can keep themselves straight in an evil place like that," Arina Petrovna goes on. "It's that sort of thing, you know—once you make a

* F. P. Plevako and A. I. Yazikov, gifted orators and famous defence lawyers in the 1870's, took on the most sensational and often scandalous cases, which last circumstance damaged their reputations, Yazikov's especially. Yazikov wrote and translated poetry, which is hinted at by the author.—Ed.

slip there's no retrieving a girl's honour. You may go and whistle for it!"

"Much they care about it!" Judas snaps back.

"But nevertheless. . . . A girl's honour is, one may say, her greatest treasure. Who would marry her if she lost it?"

"Nowadays, Mamma, they don't care whether a man is their legal husband or not. Nowadays they make fun of what religion teaches us! They walk to a bush, get married under it—and that's that. They call it civil marriage."

At this moment it strikes Judas suddenly that he, too, is living in sin with a spinster of a clerical family.

"Sometimes, of course, if there is nothing for it. . ." he corrects himself. "If a man is still in his prime, and a widower too . . . there are cases when the law has to be set aside!"

"Of course! If hard pressed a plover will sing like a nightingale. Even saints sinned when they were driven to it, to say nothing of us sinners."

"That's just it. Do you know what I would do if I were you?"

"Advise me, dear; tell me."

"I should ask them to give you a deed of trust for Pogorelka."

Arina Petrovna glances at him uneasily.

"But I have one as it is for managing the estate," she says.

"Not only for managing it, but for selling or mortgaging it—so that you could do what you liked with it, in fact. . . ."

Arina Petrovna looks down and says nothing.

"Of course it's a matter that wants thinking over. Think about it, Mamma!" Judas insists.

But Arina Petrovna remains silent. Although in her old age her mind has dulled considerably, she nevertheless feels rather uncomfortable about Judas's insinuations. She is afraid of him; she would be sorry to lose Golovlyovo with its warmth, comfort and plenty, but at the same time she fancies there must be something behind it if he began talking of a deed of trust and that it is a new trap he is setting for her. The atmosphere is growing so tense

that she begins to regret having so foolishly shown him the letter. Fortunately, Yevpraxeya comes to the rescue.

"Well, are we going to play cards or aren't we?" she asks.

"Let us, let us!" Arina Petrovna hastens to answer, quickly getting up from her seat. But on the way to the card-table another thought strikes her.

"Do you know what date it is today?" she turns to Porphiry Vladimirich.

"The twenty-third of November, Mamma," Judas answers, surprised.

"The twenty-third—yes, but do you remember what happened on the twenty-third? I expect you forgot about the requiem?"

Porphiry Vladimirich turns pale and crosses himself.

"Good heavens! How dreadful!" he exclaims. "But was it really . . . was it on the twenty-third? Wait a minute, I'll look in the calendar."

A few minutes later he brings the calendar and finds in it a sheet of paper with the words: "November 23. The day of my dear son Vladimir's death. Rest, dear remains, till the joyous morn! and pray for your Papa, who will on that day, without fail, have a Mass and a requiem service said for you."

"There's a nice how-d'ye-do!" Porphiry Vladimirich says. "Ah, Volodya, Volodya! you bad, you naughty son! You can't be praying for your Papa if God makes him lose his memory like that! What are we to do, Mamma?"

"There's nothing so very dreadful about it—you can have the service tomorrow just as well. We'll have the Mass and the requiem, all as it should be. It's all my fault, forgetful old creature that I am! I came here on purpose to remind you, but it slipped my mind completely on the way."

"Oh, what a sin! Good thing at least that the lamps are lit in the icon-room! It was like an inspiration from above. It isn't a holiday today either—they've simply been left burning since Our Lady's festival—and this morning Yevpraxeya came and asked me, 'Shall I put them out?' And it was just as though something had pushed me—I thought for a moment and said, 'Don't touch

them! Let them burn, bless them!' And now I see what it meant!"

"Yes, it's a good thing that the icon-lamps are alight. It's something for his soul, anyway. Where are you going to sit? Will you deal to me, or again give an easy time of it to your fine lady?"

"I don't really know, Mamma, whether I ought..."

"Why ever not? Sit down! God will forgive you! You didn't do it intentionally, you just forgot. That happens even to the righteous! Tomorrow we'll get up with daylight, go to Mass and have a requiem service for him, all in the proper fashion. His soul will rejoice that his friends and relatives remembered him, and our minds too will be at rest because we shall have done our duty. So there! And you mustn't grieve, my dear—I always say that: you won't bring your son back to life by grieving, and besides, it's a sin against God."

Judas is reassured by these words and says, kissing his Mamma's hand:

"Ah, Mamma, Mamma! You have a heart of gold, really! If it weren't for you, where would I be now? I would have been simply lost! Done for!"

Porphiry Vladimirich gives orders about the following day's ceremony and they all sit down to cards. They play one game, then another. Arina Petrovna loses her temper and is indignant with Judas for dealing Yevpraxeya only one card at a time. In between the games Judas indulges in memories about his dead son.

"And what an affectionate boy he was!" he says. "He would never take anything without permission. If he wanted a piece of paper, he would ask, 'May I take a piece of paper, Papa?'—'Take some, dear.' Or, 'Would you be so kind, Papa, as to have some carp fried in sour cream for lunch today?'—'Certainly, dear.' Ah, Volodya, Volodya! You were a good boy in every way, but it was naughty of you to leave your Papa!"

A few more hands are played; more memories follow.

"And what came over him so suddenly, I can't make out! He lived so nicely and quietly, a joy to his father—what could be better! And suddenly—bang! And just think of the sin of it! Only consider, Mamma, what he

presumed to do—taking his own life, the gift of our Heavenly Father! And why? What for? What was amiss? Was it for lack of money? I am not a man to keep back anyone's salary; even my enemies cannot bring this up against me. But if you thought you hadn't enough, I couldn't help that, my boy. Papa's money doesn't come to him easily! If you haven't enough money, you must learn frugality. You can't always have things sweet and tasty—at times you must have them plain and sour! Yes, my dear boy! Here, your Papa was hoping to receive some money this morning, but the steward came and said, 'The Terpenkovo peasants haven't paid their rent!' Well, there was nothing for it, I wrote a petition to the magistrate. Ah, Volodya, Volodya! No, you're not a good boy! You abandoned your Papa, left him alone in the world!"

As the game grows more lively, his reminiscences grow more and more touching.

"And what a clever boy he was! I remember he lay ill with measles—he wasn't more than seven at the time—and when his mother came up to him he said, 'Mamma, it's only angels that have wings, isn't it?' She said, 'Yes, only angels.' 'Why, then, did Papa have wings when he came into the room just now?' "

At last they have an extraordinary game: Judas is made "a fool" although he has eight cards left on his hands, including the ace, the king and the queen of trumps. There is much laughter and teasing, in which Judas joins benevolently. Amidst the general merriment Arina Petrovna suddenly grows still and listens.

"Hush! Be quiet! There's someone coming!" she says. Judas and Yevpraxeya listen also but cannot hear anything.

"I tell you, there's someone coming! There ... do you hear? The wind blew this way. ... Listen! There's someone coming and quite near now!"

They all begin to listen again, and this time they hear a distant sound of bells brought near by the wind one moment and then carried away again. Some five minutes go by and bells can be heard quite clearly now; then there are voices in the yard.

"The young master! Pyotr Porphiryich has come!" is heard in the hall.

Judas, white as a sheet, gets up from his chair and stands as though rooted to the spot.

Petenka walked in somewhat listlessly, kissed his father's hand, then repeated the ceremony with his grandmother, bowed to Yevpraxeya and sat down. He was a rather good-looking young man of twenty-five, dressed in an officer's travelling uniform. This was all one could say about him, and Judas himself hardly knew more than that. The relations between the father and the son were such that they could not even be called strained—they were simply non-existent, so to speak. Judas knew there was a man who, the documents said, was his son, to whom he had on certain dates to send a fixed allowance, that is, fixed by himself, and from whom in return he had the right to claim respect and obedience. Petenka for his part knew that he had a father who could at any time cut down his allowance. He came to Golovlyovo readily enough, especially since he had received his commission—not because he enjoyed talking to his father, but simply because he, like any man who has no conscious purpose in life, was instinctively drawn to his native place. This time, however, he obviously came driven by some urgent need, and consequently he did not show a single sign of the joyful surprise that generally marks a prodigal son's return to his ancestral home.

Petenka was disinclined to talk. To his father's exclamations—"This is indeed a surprise! You have played a trick on us, my boy! I was wondering who on earth could be driving about this time of night—and here it's you!"—he either said nothing or smiled a forced smile. To the question, "Whatever made you think of coming?" he answered almost rudely:

"I just thought of it and came, that's all."

"Well, thank you, thank you for remembering your father! That was kind of you! I expect you thought of your old grandmother too?"

"Yes, I thought of Grandmother too."

"Wait a minute, perhaps you remembered that this was your brother Volodenka's memorial day?"

"Yes, I remembered that too."

Conversation went on in this strain for about half an hour, and it was hard to tell whether Petenka meant what he said or merely spoke for the sake of saying something. And so, patient as Judas was about his children's indifference, he could not resist saying at last:

"You aren't particularly amiable, my boy! No one could say you were an affectionate son!"

Had Petenka said nothing to this and received his father's rebuke with meekness, or, better still, had he kissed his Papa's hand and said, "Forgive me, dearest Papa, I am tired after the journey, you know,"—all would have been well. But Petenka behaved most ungraciously.

"I am what I am," he answered so rudely as though to say, "Stop pestering me, for heaven's sake!"

Porphyry Vladimirich felt so hurt, so hurt that he could not possibly help saying bitterly:

"And to think of all the trouble I have taken for your sake! Even as I sit here I never stop thinking of how best to arrange matters so that everyone should be nice and comfortable and know no poverty or distress.... And you two always shunned me!"

"How do you mean—'you two'?"

"Well, I'll speak of you only ... though Volodya was just the same, God rest his soul."

"But I am very grateful to you!"

"I don't see any gratitude in either of you! No gratitude, no affection, nothing!"

"I am not of an affectionate disposition, that's all. But why do you keep speaking of us both? One is dead already...."

"Yes, he is dead, God punished him. God always punishes disobedient children. And yet I think of him. He was a disobedient son and still I think of him. Tomorrow, we'll have a Mass said for him and a requiem service. He wronged me, but I remember my duty just the same. Good Lord, what are we coming to! A son has no sooner crossed the threshold of his father's home than he begins to snap at him! It wasn't like this in my time! Coming home to Golovlyovo in the old days I used to repeat for the last twenty miles of the journey, 'Remember

King David, O Lord, and all his meekness!' But Mamma is here to bear me out—she'll tell you. But nowadays—I don't understand it, I don't understand it!"

"I do not understand it either. I came here peaceably, I kissed your hand in greeting, and now I sit drinking tea, doing you no harm, and if you give me supper too, I'll have supper. Why are you making all this fuss?"

Arina Petrovna sat in her armchair, listening to all this, and it seemed to her as though she were hearing the same old story that had begun she could not remember how long ago. The book had been closed, one would have thought, and yet it kept opening on exactly the same page as before. She saw quite plainly, however, that such a meeting between father and son boded no good and felt called upon to intercede and say a few conciliatory words.

"There, there, you turkey-cocks!" she said, trying to speak jocularly. "They have no sooner met than they begin to fight! The way they go for each other, dear me! There will be feathers flying in the air directly! Oh my! Oh, how very wrong! You had better sit still, my dears, and talk to each other nicely, and then it will be a pleasure for an old woman like me to listen to you! You must give in, Petenka! You must always give in to your father, my dear, because he is your father. If sometimes you may think he is hard on you, you must submit readily and respectfully, because you are his son. The bitter may turn into sweet, and you'll be the beneficiary. And you, Porphiry Vladimirich, must be forebearing. He is your son, he is young and used to comfort. He has driven fifty miles over rough roads and snow-drifts: so tell them to serve supper and then we'll go bye-byes. That's the thing to do, my dears! We'll each go to our room, say our prayers and our anger will be gone. With God's help sleep will drive away any bad thoughts we may have had, and tomorrow, we'll get up early and pray for the deceased. We'll hear Mass, have a requiem service sung, and then come home and talk. And after we've had a rest each will tell his story properly. You, Petenka, will tell us about Petersburg, and you, Porphiry, about things here in the country. And now let us have supper and, with God's blessing—to bed."

This admonition had effect, not because there was anything really convincing in it, but because Judas saw that he really had gone too far, and that it was best to end the day peaceably. He got up, kissed his Mamma's hand, thanked her for "teaching them the right thing to do", and ordered supper to be served. The meal passed in gloomy silence.

The dining-room was now deserted; all had retired. The house was gradually growing quiet; dead stillness crept from room to room, reaching at last the stronghold in which the daily ritual of worship persisted longest—that is, the master's study. Judas at last finished with his countless genuflexions before the icons and went to bed also.

He lay in bed, but he could not go to sleep. He was aware that his son's arrival betokened something unusual, and all kinds of trivial admonitions were already springing up in his mind. The advantage of these admonitions was that they fitted any occasion and did not express any coherent train of thought. They required no grammatical form, no rules of syntax. They accumulated in his mind in the shape of disconnected aphorisms and slipped off the tongue of themselves just as they came. But whenever something out of the ordinary happened, these aphorisms so thronged Judas's mind that not even sleep could calm the turmoil of his thoughts.

Judas could not sleep: an oppressive mass of empty words seemed to crowd around him and wall him in. Strictly speaking, Petenka's mysterious arrival did not particularly trouble him, for, whatever happened, he was always ready for *anything*. He knew that *nothing* could catch him unawares or cause him to make the slightest deviation from the stale and meaningless maxims that he wrapped himself in from head to foot as in a cloak. Sorrow and joy, love and hate did not exist for him: the whole world was to him a dead thing that merely provided one with an opportunity for an endless flow of talk. What could be more grievous than Volodya's suicide. Yet Judas had held out. It had been a very sad affair that went on for two whole years. For two whole years Volodya tried to bear up; at first he was proud and determined

not to ask his father's help; then he weakened and began to beg, to argue, to threaten. . . . And in answer he always received some ready-made maxim that was like a stone given to a hungry man. It is a moot question whether Judas understood that it was stone and not bread, but in any case he possessed nothing else and he gave his stone as the only thing he could offer. When Volodya shot himself he had a requiem service sung for him, wrote down the date of his death in the calendar and promised to have a requiem service, and a Mass too, sung for him every year on the 23rd of November. And when, in spite of all, some inner voice seemed vaguely to mutter to him at times that suicide was, to say the least, a rather doubtful means of solving family quarrels, he immediately produced a whole series of convenient aphorisms, such as "God punishes disobedient children", "Pride goes before a fall", etc.—and put his mind at rest.

It was the same thing now. There was no doubt that something bad had happened to Petenka, but he, Porphiry Golovlyov, must at all costs rise above any such eventualities. You reap what you sow; as you made your bed so you must lie on it; you called the tune, now you must pay the piper; yes, that was it—this was precisely what he would say the next day, whatever his son might tell him. But what if Petenka, like Volodya, refused to take a stone instead of bread? What if he too. . . . Judas banished the thought as coming from the Evil One. He turned over from side to side trying to go to sleep, but sleep he could not. As soon as he began to drop off, he suddenly seemed to hear: "It's no use crying for the moon, you must cut your coat according to your cloth . . . now I . . . and you, you see . . . you are too hasty, and you know the proverb—more speed, less haste." Empty words seemed to be all round him, creeping up to him, closing in upon him. Judas lay sleepless under the burden of trite phrases in which he hoped to take refuge the next day.

Petenka could not sleep either, tired though he was after the journey. He had something on his mind, and it could only be settled here at Golovlyovo, but he did not know how to tackle the business. To tell the truth, Petenka knew very well that his case was hopeless, that

the visit to Golovlyovo would only mean fresh unpleasantness, but there is in every man an obscure instinct of self-preservation that overrules his conscious mind and eggs him on to try every possible means he can think of. And so Petenka came, but instead of bracing himself to endure all that was coming, he very nearly quarrelled with his father at the outset. What would come of his visit? Would there be a miracle and would stone turn into bread?

Would it not have been nobler to have taken a revolver and said, holding it to his temple, "Gentlemen, I am not worthy of wearing your uniform! I have embezzled and squandered the regiment's money and so I pass a stern but just sentence upon myself!"—bang! And all would have been over. "The *deceased* lieutenant Golovlyov is struck off the lists."—Yes, that would have been decisive and . . . beautiful. His comrades would have said, "You were unlucky, you allowed yourself to be carried away, but you were an *honourable* man!" But instead of acting in that way he had let things drag on till everyone came to know what he had done—and he had been given a few days' grace in which to secure the money and refund it. And then—out of the regiment. It was with this purpose—which meant a disgraceful end to the career he had just begun—that he came to Golovlyovo, knowing beforehand that he would receive a stone instead of bread!

But perhaps something would come of it. Things do happen sometimes. . . . The Golovlyovo of today might vanish suddenly and a new Golovlyovo appear in its place in which he. . . . Not that his father might die . . . why should he?—but simply . . . there might be a change. . . . Or perhaps his grandmother would come to the rescue—she had money, of course! She would hear that he was in desperate trouble and would suddenly give it to him! Take it and go, she would say, before your time is up! And he would dash off, urging on the drivers and just managing to get to the station in time—and arrive at his regiment two hours before his time was up! "Well done, Golovlyov!" his comrades would say. "Your hand, you honourable young man, and let us forget the past!" And he would not merely stay on in his regiment but be made a first-lieutenant and then a captain, and an aide-de-camp (he

had already been the regiment's treasurer), and at last, on the day of the regimental jubilee. . . .

Ah, if only the night would pass! Tomorrow . . . well, tomorrow, come what may! But to think what he would have to listen to! What wouldn't his father say to him! Though why tomorrow? He still had another day before him. . . . He had asked for two days so that he might have time to persuade his father, to move him. . . . Like hell he'd move him! Not much chance of that. . . .

At this point his thoughts grew completely muddled and faded away one after another into the fog of sleep. A quarter of an hour later Golovlyovo was plunged in profound slumber.

The whole household was up early the next morning. Everyone went to church except Petenka, who stayed at home under the pretext of being tired after the journey. After hearing Mass and the requiem service they came home. Petenka went up as usual to kiss his father's hand, but Judas gave him his hand without looking at him and everyone noticed that he did not even bless his son. They had tea and ate the traditional frumenty; Judas walked about sunk in gloom, and shuffling his feet; he avoided conversation, kept sighing and folding his hands in sign of inward prayer, and never glanced at his son at all. Petenka looked uncomfortable and smoked one cigarette after another in silence. The strained atmosphere of the day before, far from improving overnight, grew so sharply antagonistic that Arina Petrovna grew really alarmed and decided to question Yevpraxeya whether anything had happened.

"What's the matter with them, glaring at each other like mortal enemies all the morning?" she asked.

"How should I know! What have their affairs to do with me?" Yevpraxeya retorted.

"Is it because of you, I wonder? Perhaps my grandson has gone after you too?"

"Why should he? It's just that he waylaid me in the passage this morning, and Porphiry Vladimich saw it!"

"H'm, so that's what it is!"

And, indeed, in spite of his desperate position Petenka had behaved with his usual frivolity. He too admired

Yevpraxeya's powerful back and decided to tell her so. As a matter of fact it was with this purpose in view that he stayed away from church, hoping that Yevpraxeya, being the housekeeper, would remain at home also. When all was quiet in the house he threw his coat over his shoulders and hid in the passage. Two or three minutes later the servants' hall door banged and Yevpraxeya appeared at the end of the passage bearing a tray with a freshly baked cake for tea. But Petenka had hardly had time to give her a good slap between her shoulder-blades and say, "My word, what a back!" when the dining-room door opened and his father's figure appeared in the doorway.

"If you have come here to indulge in lust, you scoundrel, I'll have you thrown down the stairs!" Judas said in a voice of indescribable malice.

Petenka, of course, beat a hasty retreat.

He understood well enough that the morning's mishap was not likely to improve his chances, and so he decided to say nothing that day, putting off the explanation till the morrow. In the meantime, however, he did nothing to allay his father's irritation but on the contrary behaved in the most thoughtless and foolish way imaginable. He smoked continuously, regardless of the fact that his father ostentatiously waved away the clouds of smoke with which he filled the room. Then he kept throwing fatuously tender glances at Yevpraxeya, who responded with a kind of wry smile—and Judas noticed that too.

The day dragged on endlessly. Arina Petrovna started a game of "fools" with Yevpraxeya, but it was not a success. No one felt inclined to play or talk, and even the usual trivialities did not come into their minds, though they each had such a rich store of them. Dinner came at long last, but at dinner too they were all silent. After dinner Arina Petrovna suggested that she would go back to Pogorelka, but Judas was positively alarmed at his darling Mamma's intention.

"Why, bless you! Would you leave me alone with this ... bad son?" he exclaimed. "No, no, no! You mustn't think of it! I won't let you go!"

"But what is it? Has anything happened? Tell me!" she asked.

"Nothing has happened yet, but you'll see. . . . No, please don't leave me! I'd rather you were here when. . . . There's something behind it, there's something behind his turning up so suddenly. So if anything happens, I want you to be witness!"

Arina Petrovna shook her head and decided to stay.

After dinner Porphyry Vladimirich went to have a nap, having first sent Yevpraxeya away to the village priest's. Arina Petrovna also went to her room and dozed in an armchair. Petenka thought this an opportune moment to try his luck with Grandmamma and went in to her.

"What is it, have you come to have a game of 'fools' with your old grandmother?" Arina Petrovna asked.

"No, Grandmamma, I have come on business!"

"Well, tell me what it is."

After hesitating for a moment Petenka blurted out: "I've gambled away the regiment's money, Grandmamma."

The shock made everything go dark before her eyes.

"Much?" she asked in a frightened voice, staring at him.

"Three thousand."

A moment's silence followed; Arina Petrovna glanced anxiously from side to side as though hoping for help to arrive.

"And do you know that a thing like that means Siberia?" she brought out at last.

"I know."

"Ah, you poor, poor boy!"

"I was wondering if you could lend me the money, Grandmamma. . . . I would give you good interest on it."

Arina Petrovna was quite frightened.

"What are you talking about!" she said in a flurry. "I only have enough money left for my funeral and the requiems! I couldn't keep body and soul together if it weren't for my grand-daughters and these titbits from my son. No, no, no! Leave me in peace, I beg you! You know, you had better ask your Papa."

"One might as well try to draw blood from a stone! I was counting on you, Grandmamma!"

"Good heavens! Why, I should have been only too glad, but I have no money to speak of! And as much as that too! Try your father, and mind you speak affectionately and respectfully—say, 'This is how it is, Papa: I am young and foolish and so I got into trouble. . . .' Smile, kiss his hand, go on your knees and shed a few tears—he likes that—and he'll untie his purse-strings for his dear son."

"You think so? Maybe I should really try it? Wait a minute! What if you were to say to him, Grandmamma, 'If you don't give the money, I'll curse you!' He has always been afraid of your cursing him."

"Now, now, why should I curse him! You can ask him without that. Beg him, dear! After all, it won't hurt you to go down on your knees to him—he is your father! And he too will see. . . . Do as I tell you, do!"

Petenka walked about the room, arms akimbo, as though thinking things over; at last he stopped and said:

"No, it's no use. He won't give it to me anyway. I might wear my knees through kneeling to him, and still he wouldn't give it to me. He might, if you threatened to curse him. . . . Well, what am I to do, Grandmamma?"

"I really don't know. Try—you may be able to soften him. But how could you do anything so desperate? It's no joke gambling away the regiment's money! Had anyone put you up to it or something?"

"I just went and did it, that's all. Well, if you have no money of your own, give me some of my cousins'!"

"My dear, think what you are saying! How can I give you the orphans' money? No, please spare me, I beg you! Don't talk to me about it, for Christ's sake!"

"So you won't? It's a pity. I would give you good interest on it. Would you like to have 5 per cent a month? No? Well, then, 100 per cent at the end of the year!"

"Don't you tempt me!" Arina Petrovna waved him off. "Leave me alone, for Christ's sake! Your Papa might hear and think that I put you up to it! Oh, dear, dear! I was going to have a rest and had just dozed off and here he comes to an old woman like me with such a business!"

"Oh, very well. I'll go away. So you cannot? Excellent. Like good relatives! For a paltry three thousand you'll

send your grandson to Siberia. Don't forget to have a service sung to bless me on the way!"

Petenka strode out of the room and banged the door. One of his frivolous hopes was dashed. What was he to do now? The only thing that remained was to make a clean breast of it to his father. And maybe . . . perhaps something. . . .

"I'll go at once and make an end of it!" he said to himself. "Or no . . . no, why should I do it today? Something might turn up . . . though what can turn up? Still I'd better wait till tomorrow. . . . Anyway I have today. Yes, let it be tomorrow! I'll speak to him and go away."

He decided on that: the next day was to settle it all.

After his interview with his grandmother time dragged on more slowly than ever. Arina Petrovna became subdued on learning the real reason of Petenka's visit. Judas made several playful advances to his dear Mamma, but seeing that she had something on her mind, relapsed into silence. Petenka, too, did nothing but smoke. At supper Porphyry Vladimirich turned to him with the question:

"Will you tell us at last, why you have honoured us with a visit?"

"I'll tell you tomorrow," Petenka answered sullenly.

- Petenka got up early after an all but sleepless night. The same double-edged thought pursued him—the thought that began with the hope, "Maybe he'll give it to me!" and invariably ended with the question, "Why ever did I come here?" It may be that he did not understand his father, but he certainly did not know of a single feeling, of a single weakness in him on which he might play in order to attain his object. He merely felt that in his father's presence he was face to face with something slippery and incalculable. Not knowing where to begin or how to approach him made Petenka uneasy, if not actually frightened. It had been so since his childhood. As far back as he could remember it had always seemed better to abandon a plan altogether than to submit it to his father's decision. It was the same thing now. How was he to begin? What should he say? Oh, why did he come!

He felt wretched. But since he had only a few hours

left he knew that something had to be done. Screwing up his courage he buttoned his coat and, whispering something to himself, walked with a fairly firm step to his father's study.

Judas was at his prayers. He was pious and readily devoted several hours a day to prayer. But he prayed not because he loved God and through prayer hoped to enter into communion with Him, but because he was afraid of the devil and hoped that God would deliver him from evil. He knew a great number of prayers and had thoroughly mastered the technique of praying—that is to say, he knew when to move his lips and look up to heaven, when to fold his hands and when to raise them, when to show feeling and when to stand sedately, crossing himself occasionally. His eyes and nose turned red and watered at appropriate moments indicated by devotional practice. But prayer did not regenerate him, did not purify his feelings or bring a single ray of light into his dull existence. He could go on praying and performing all the necessary movements, and at the same time be looking out of the window to see if anyone went to the cellar without permission, etc. Prayer was for him a thing apart sufficient unto itself and not in the least connected with life as a whole.

When Petenka came in, Porphiry Vladimirich was kneeling, with uplifted arms. He did not change his position but merely waved one hand to show that it was not yet time. Petenka settled down to wait in the dining-room where the table was already set for breakfast. The half-hour he spent there seemed to him an eternity, all the more so because he was convinced that his father kept him waiting on purpose. The assumed courage with which he had armed himself gradually gave way to vexation. At first he sat still, then he started walking up and down the room, and at last began to whistle a tune. At this point, the study door opened slightly and Judas's angry voice said:

"Those who want to whistle may go and do it in the stables."

A few minutes afterwards Porphiry Vladimirich emerged, all in black and wearing a clean shirt, as though dressed for some solemn occasion. His face had a serene and gentle expression, breathing of joy and humility as

though he had just partaken of the Holy Communion. He went up to his son, blessed and kissed him.

"Good morning, my dear," he said.

"Good morning!"

"How did you sleep? Was your bed nice and comfy? No little bugs or fleas to disturb you?"

"Thank you. I slept."

"Well, if you slept, that's splendid. One doesn't sleep anywhere so sweetly as under the parental roof. I know it from my own experience; I might be ever so comfortable in Petersburg, but I never slept there as sweetly as at Golovlyovo. It's like being rocked in a cradle. Well, what shall we do: have breakfast first, or would you rather tell me something now?"

"No, let us talk first. I have to leave in six hours from now, and it may take some time to think things over."

"Very well. But I make up my mind at once, my boy, I never think things over. I always have my answer ready. If you ask for what is right—have it, I never refuse what is right. It may be a bit difficult for me sometimes, and more than I can manage, but if I am asked to do what is right, I cannot refuse—that's the way I'm made. But if you ask for what is wrong, you must take 'no' for an answer. I may be sorry for you, but I'll refuse all the same! There are no subterfuges about me, my boy! Right is right and wrong is wrong. Well, come to the study, you'll talk and I'll listen. Let's hear what you have to say!"

When they came into the study Porphyry Vladimirich left the door slightly ajar and, instead of sitting down or offering his son a chair, began walking up and down the room. He seemed to know by instinct that it would be a ticklish business and that it was far more convenient to discuss such matters while moving about. It was easier to conceal one's expression and to cut short the conversation if it took too unpleasant a turn. And leaving the door left ajar made it possible to call in witnesses, for Mamma and Yevpraxeya would be sure to come into the dining-room directly.

"I have gambled away the regiment's money, Papa," Petenka said dully, without any preliminaries.

Judas said nothing and only his lips quivered notice-

ably. Then he began to whisper to himself as was his wont.

"I lost three thousand," Petenka explained, "and if I don't refund the money the day after tomorrow the consequences may be very unpleasant for me."

"Well then, refund it!" Porphiry Vladimirich said amiably.

Father and son made a few tours round the room in silence, Petenka wanted to go on but felt a spasm in his throat.

"But where am I to get the money?" he brought out at last.

"I don't know your resources, my dear. Pay it out of whatever resources you had in mind when you were gambling your regiment's money away."

"You know perfectly well that in such cases one doesn't think of his resources!"

"I know nothing about it, my dear. I have never played cards—except for a game of 'fools' with Mamma, just to amuse the dear old soul. And don't you mix me up in your dirty affairs. Let us go and have breakfast instead. We'll sit down and drink some tea and perhaps talk of something, only, for Christ's sake, not of this."

Judas made for the door, intending to slip into the dining-room, but Petenka stopped him.

"But look here," he said. "I must find some way out of this fix!"

Judas smirked and looked Petenka in the face.

"You must, dear!" he agreed.

"Then help me!"

"Ah, that's a different matter. You certainly must find some way out—you are right there—but how you are to do it is none of my business!"

"But why don't you want to help me?"

"In the first place because I have no money to cover up your dirty affairs, and secondly because it simply has nothing to do with me. You got yourself into a mess and you must get yourself out of it. You've made your bed and you must lie on it. That's how it is, my dear, I have begun by telling you, you know, that if you ask for what is right. . . ."

"I know, I know. You are very glib with words. . . ."

"Wait, put a curb on your tongue, let me finish. I'll prove to you in a minute that they are not mere words. . . . And so, I have said to you just now: if you ask for what is right and proper—very well, my dear, I am always ready to satisfy you! But if you come with an absurd request—you must excuse me, my boy! I have no money for your nasty affairs, no, no, no! Nor shall I have any, let me tell you! Don't you dare to say that these are mere 'words'—you'll see, they come very near to deeds!"

"But just think what will happen to me!"

"Whatever God wills so be it!" Judas answered, slightly raising his hands and glancing sideways at the icon.

Father and son made a few more tours round the room. Judas walked reluctantly, as though complaining that his son held him prisoner. Petenka walked behind, arms akimbo, biting his moustache and smiling nervously.

"I am the only son you have left," he said. "Don't forget that."

"God took from Job all he had, my dear, and yet he did not repine, but only said, 'God has given, God has taken away—God's will be done.' So that's how it is, my boy."

"It was God took Job's children, but with you it's your own doing. Volodya. . . ."

"I think you are beginning to talk nonsense."

"No, it isn't nonsense, it's the truth. Everybody knows that Volodya. . . ."

"No, no, no! I won't listen to your absurdities. I've had enough. You have said what you had to say. I have given you my answer. And now let us go and have breakfast. We'll sit and talk, and then we'll have breakfast and a glass of wine to set you off on your journey—and God speed you. You see how kind God is to you! The snow-storm has stopped and the roads are better. You'll drive along nicely and softly, trit-trot, trit-trot, and before you know it you'll be at the station."

"But listen, I beg you! If there's a spark of feeling in you. . . ."

"No, no, no! We won't speak of it! Let us go to the dining-room: I expect Mamma wants her cup of tea. It doesn't do to keep an old lady waiting."

Judas made a sharp turn and almost ran to the door.

"You may go on or stay, but I won't leave it at that!" Petenka shouted after him. "It will be worse for you if we talk before witnesses!"

Judas came back and faced his son.

"What do you want of me, you scoundrel? Speak out!" he asked in a trembling voice.

"I want you to pay the money I lost at cards."

"Never!"

"So this is your last word?"

"Do you see this?" Judas exclaimed solemnly, pointing to the icon in the corner. "Do you see? This is my father's blessing. . . . Here, before it, I tell you . . . never!"

And he walked out of his study with a resolute step.

"Murderer!" his son shouted after him.

Arina Petrovna was already at the table and Yevpraxeya was making tea. The old woman was silent and thoughtful, and seemed, as it were, ashamed of Petenka. Judas went up as usual to kiss her hand and she blessed him, also as usual. Then followed the usual questions about everyone's health and the kind of night everyone had had, and the usual monosyllabic answers.

She had been depressed since the day before. From the moment that Petenka asked her for money and reminded her of "the curse", a kind of puzzling restlessness gained possession of her; and a thought kept haunting her: "And what if I do curse him?" When she heard in the morning that there was an explanation going in the study, she asked Yevpraxeya:

"Go and listen quietly at the door to hear what they are saying!" But although Yevpraxeya did listen she was too stupid to understand anything.

"They are just talking! They are not shouting much!" she announced, coming back.

Arina Petrovna could contain herself no longer and went into the dining-room, where the samovar had been brought meanwhile. But the conversation was coming to an end; she only heard Petenka raising his voice and Porphiry Vladimirich buzzing in reply.

"'Buzzing', that's just the word," the thought came into

her mind. "He buzzed just like this in the old days, and to think I didn't understand at the time!"

At last both father and son came into the dining-room. Petenka was red and breathed heavily; his eyes were wide open, his hair dishevelled, and small beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead. Judas looked pale and angry, and in spite of all his efforts to appear unconcerned his lower lip was trembling. He hardly managed to utter his usual morning greeting to his darling Mamma.

They all took their places at the table; Petenka pushed away his chair, sat leaning back in it and crossed his legs; as he lit a cigarette he glanced ironically at his father.

"See how the weather has calmed down, Mamma," Judas began. "The way it stormed yesterday, but it was enough for God to will it—and all is still and quiet and peaceful. Isn't that so, dear?"

"I don't know, I haven't been out today."

"As we are seeing off our dear guest today, it's a good thing," Judas went on. "I got up ever so early this morning and looked out of the window—and all was as still and peaceful outside as though God's angel had flown past and quieted all that turmoil with his wing!"

But no one made any answer to Judas's pleasant words; Yevpraxeya was noisily drinking tea out of the saucer, blowing and snorting; Arina Petrovna gazed into her cup and said nothing; Petenka was rocking his chair and looking at his father so sarcastically and defiantly as if he were making a tremendous effort to hold back a guffaw.

"Even if Petenka doesn't drive fast," Porphiry Vladimirich went on, "he'll reach the station easily enough before dusk. The horses are our own, no one wears them out, and if they have a couple of hours' rest at Muravyovo they'll rush him to the station in no time. And then, phew! The train will go puff-puff-puff! But it's really too bad of you, Petenka! I wish you'd stay with us for a bit—do! It would be company for us, and see how you would put on weight here in one week!"

But Petenka went on rocking his chair and looking at his father.

"Why do you keep looking at me?" Judas boiled over at last. "Do you see any patterns on me, or what?"

"I am waiting to see what you'll be doing next."

"No use your waiting, my boy! It will be as I have said. I won't go back on my word."

A moment's silence followed and in that moment an audible whisper was heard: "Judas!"

Porphiry Vladimirich undoubtedly heard it (he actually turned pale) but he pretended that the exclamation did not concern him.

"Ah, children, children!" he said. "One is sorry for you and would like to pet you and caress you a little, but it looks as if it isn't meant to be. You turn away from your parents, you make your own friends who are dearer to you than your father and mother. Well, there is nothing for it! One thinks and worries about it, but has to give in. You are young people, and the young naturally like to be with those of their own age and not with a grumpy old man. And so one has to be humble and not repine. All one asks of the Heavenly Father is, 'May Thy will be done, O Lord!'"

"Murderer!" Petenka whispered again so clearly now that Arina Petrovna looked at him in alarm. It was as though the shadow of Styopka the blockhead suddenly flashed before her eyes.

"Who are you talking about?" Judas asked, shaking with emotion.

"Oh, just someone I know."

"I see! Well then, say so! Heaven only knows what's on your mind: you may be thus abusing someone in the room!"

All fell silent; their tea was untouched. Judas also leaned against the back of his chair, rocking himself nervously. Petenka, seeing that all hope was lost, felt something like mortal anguish and no longer cared what he did. Father and son looked into each other's eyes with an indescribable smile. In spite of all his training Porphiry Vladimirich felt he was about to lose his self-control.

"You had better go before any harm is done!" he said at last. "Yes!"

"I'll go right enough!"

"Why wait? I see you want to pick a quarrel, and I don't want to quarrel with anybody. We live here in peace and quiet, with no quarrels or dissensions; your old granny



is sitting here—you might consider her, at least. What have you come here for, I should like to know?"

"I have told you."

"Oh, if that was all, you needn't have troubled. Go away, my boy! Hey, who is there? Tell them to harness the horses for the young master! And pack a nice roast chicken and a bit of caviare, and something else . . . say, a few eggs . . . wrap it all up in paper. You'll have a bite at the station, my boy, while they are feeding the horses. God speed you!"

"No, I am not going yet. I'll go to the church first and have a prayer said for the soul of the murdered Vladimir."

"You mean, of the suicide."

"No, of the murdered."

Father and son glared at one another; they both seemed ready to jump up from their seats. But Judas made a superhuman effort and turned his chair towards the table.

"Extraordinary!" he said in a choking voice. "Extraor-di-na-ry!"

"Yes, murdered," Petenka repeated bluntly.

"Who was it murdered him, then?" Judas inquired, still hoping, apparently, that his son would think better of it.

But Petenka, not in the least abashed, blurted out point-blank:

"You!"

"I?"

Porphiry Vladimirich was beyond himself with amazement. He stood up hastily and, turning towards the icon, began to pray.

"You! you! you!" Petenka repeated.

"There now, thank God, I feel better after saying a prayer!" Judas declared, sitting down to the table again:

"Well, then. As your father I needn't go into any explanations with you, but so be it! So you think it was I who killed Volodenka?"

"Yes, you!"

"Well, and to my knowledge it wasn't so at all. To my knowledge, he shot himself. I was at the time here, at Golovlyovo, and he was in Petersburg. So where could I have come into it? How could I have killed him at a distance of five hundred miles?"

"Do you really pretend not to understand?"

"I don't understand . . . as God is my witness, I don't."

"And who left Volodya penniless? Who stopped his allowance? Who was it?"

"Tut-tut-tut! But why did he marry against his father's wish?"

"But you gave him your permission!"

"Who? I? Good heavens! I never gave it! N-never!"

"Oh, well, of course, you acted in your usual manner. With you a word has ten different meanings: try and guess which it is!"

"I never gave him permission! He wrote to me at the time, 'I want to marry Lidochka, Papa.' You understand: *I want*, not *I ask your permission*. Well, so I answered, 'If you *want* to marry, do so, I can't prevent you.' That was all."

"That was all!" Petenka mimicked him. "And isn't that a permission?"

"That's just the point, it isn't. What did I say? I said, 'I cannot prevent you'—that's all. But whether I allowed him to marry is a different matter. He didn't ask my permission, he simply wrote, 'I *want* to marry Lidochka, Papa'—so I, too, said nothing about permission. If you *want* to marry—do, bless you! Marry Lidochka or anyone you like—I can't stop you."

"But you could leave him to starve! You should have written him then: 'I don't approve of your intention and so, though I cannot stop you, I warn you that you must not count on any money from me.' That would have been clear, at any rate."

"Oh no, I could never permit myself to do that. Bullying a grown-up son—never! My rule is not to hinder anyone. If he wants to marry—let him! But as to the consequences—that's another matter. He ought to have thought of it himself—that's what God has given him his brains for. But I never meddle in other people's affairs, my boy. I don't meddle in their affairs and I won't have them meddling in mine. I won't—in fact, I forbid them to! Do you hear, you bad, you disrespectful son?—I forbid it!"

"Forbid as much as you like, you can't stop everybody's mouth."

"And if only he had repented or understood that he had wronged his father! He did a foolish thing—very well, why couldn't he repent and ask my pardon? Why couldn't he say, 'Forgive me, darling Papa, for having grieved you'? But not he! Not a bit of it!"

"But he did write to you; he explained he had nothing to live on, that he could not go on. . . ."

"One doesn't write explanations to one's father. One asks a father's forgiveness—that's all."

"He did that too. He was so wretched that he did ask your forgiveness. He did everything—everything he could!"

"Well, even so he was to blame. He asked my pardon once, saw that Papa did not forgive him—he should have asked again!"

"Oh, you! . . ."

Petenka suddenly stopped rocking his chair, turned to the table and clasped his head in his hands.

"And now I too . . ." he said almost inaudibly.

His features grew distorted.

"And now I too . . ." he repeated, breaking into hysterical sobs.

"And whose fault is it? . . ."

But Judas was compelled to leave his moralising unfinished because at that moment something utterly unexpected happened. During the altercation that has just been described both father and son seemed to have forgotten Arina Petrovna. But she remained by no means an indifferent spectator of the family scene. Far from it. At a glance one could have told that something rather unusual was taking place in her and that perhaps the moment had come when the sum total of her own life in all its grim truth suddenly appeared before her mind's eye. Her face grew animated, her eyes gleamed and opened wider, her lips moved as though she wanted to utter something but could not. And suddenly, at the very moment when Petenka broke into hysterical sobs, she rose heavily from her chair, stretched out her arm towards Judas, and screamed:

"I cu-u-r-rse you for ever!"

THE NIECE

Judas did not give Petenka money after all, though like the good father that he was he had some roast chicken, veal, and pie put into his sledge. Then in spite of the wind and the frost, he actually came out on the front steps to see his son off, inquired if he was comfortable, if his legs were well wrapped up, and, returning to the house, stood for a long time before the window making the sign of the cross over it, sending a blessing to the sledge that took Petenka away. In short, he carried out all the ritual properly, in a true fatherly fashion.

"Ah, Petenka," he said, "you are a bad, a naughty son! To think of the mess you have got yourself into. . . . Oh dear, oh dear! You could have lived with no cares or troubles, in peace and quiet with your Papa and your old granny, one would have thought—but no! That wasn't good enough! 'I have a mind of my own, I can do what I like!' And that's what your own mind has brought you to! Oh dear, what a shame!"

But not a single muscle of his wooden face stirred as he said it, not a single note of his voice suggested anything like a call to the prodigal son. And, as a matter of fact, no one heard his words, for the only person in the room was Arina Petrovna who, after the shock she had just experienced, seemed to have suddenly lost all her vital energy and sat by the samovar with her mouth open, hearing and seeing nothing.

And then life resumed its usual course, full of idle fussing and endless prattle. . . .

Contrary to Petenka's expectations, Porphiry Vladimich bore his mother's curse rather calmly and did not

depart by a hair's breadth from the decisions that were, so to speak, always ready-made in his mind. It is true he had turned slightly pale and rushed to his mother with a cry:

"Mamma! Dear heart! Bless you! Calm yourself, dear! God willing, everything will come right!"

But these words were an expression of anxiety on his mother's account rather than on his own. Arina Petrovna's outburst was so sudden that Judas had not even thought of pretending to be frightened. Only the day before Mamma had been kind to him, she had joked and played "fools" with Yevpraxeya—so that evidently it was just a momentary aberration and there was nothing "real" and intentional about it. He had been indeed very much afraid of his mother's curse, but he had pictured it quite differently. His idle fancy had drawn for him the whole *mise en scène* of it: icons, lighted candles, Mamma standing in the middle of the room with a dark, terrible face . . . cursing him! Then thunder crashed, the candles went out, the veil was rent in twain, darkness covered the earth, and the wrathful face of Jehovah appeared in the flicker of lightnings amidst the clouds above. But since nothing of the kind had happened, it must have been just a whim on Mamma's part, a sudden whim—nothing more. And there was no reason for her to curse him "in earnest" because of late there had not been even a hint of any dissension between them. Much water had flowed by since he had expressed doubts about her ownership of the chaise (Judas admitted to himself that *then* he had been at fault and deserved cursing); Arina Petrovna had become resigned and Judas's only thought was of his darling Mamma's comfort.

"The old lady is poorly, oh how poorly! She even forgets herself at times!" he reassured himself. "The dear thing sits down to play 'fools'—and the next thing you know she's dozed off!"

It is only fair to say that he felt really anxious about Arina Petrovna's health. He was not yet prepared to lose her; he had not thought it all out or made the necessary calculations: what capital Mamma had had on leaving Dubrovino, what it was bringing in per year, how much of this income she could have spent and how much she

could have added to the capital. In short, there was a number of trifles he had not seen to, and that always made him feel as if he were caught unawares.

"The old lady has a tight little fist," he comforted himself. "She will never spend it all; not she! When she divided the property she had a good little capital. She might have passed on some of it to the orphans though—but no, she wouldn't give much to them either! She is sure to have money!"

But there was as yet nothing serious about these musings and they left no permanent trace on his mind. He had such a tremendous number of trifles to see to every day that he had no wish to increase his burden so long as there was no imperative need for it. So Porphiry Vladimirich kept putting things off, and only the sudden episode with the curse jerked him into realisation that it was high time to begin.

The catastrophe came sooner than he had thought, however. The day after Petenka's departure Arina Petrovna went to Pogorelka and never came to Golovlyovo any more. She spent a month in complete solitude, shut up in her room, hardly exchanging a word with her servants. After getting up in the morning she sat down, from habit, at her writing-table and, also from habit, began to play patience, but she hardly ever finished a game and seemed to freeze into immobility with her eyes fixed on the window. The subtlest interpreter of the inmost secrets of the human heart could not have discovered what she was thinking of or whether she was thinking at all. She seemed to be trying to recall something—for instance, to recall how she came to be there, within those four walls—and could not. Alarmed by her silence Afimyushka peeped into the room, rearranged the cushions with which the mistress was propped up, made attempts at conversation, but only received monosyllabic and impatient answers. Porphiry Vladimirich paid two or three visits to Pogorelka; he invited Mamma to Golovlyovo, he tried to tempt her imagination by the prospect of pickled mushrooms, delicious carp, and the other allurements Golovlyovo had to offer, but she merely smiled enigmatically at all his proposals.

One morning she wanted to get up as usual, and could not. She was not conscious of any pain, did not complain of anything, but simply could not get up. She was not in the least disturbed by that circumstance, as though it were the most usual thing in the world. Only the day before she had sat at the table and was able to work—and now she lay in bed “unwell”. She felt more comfortable in bed as a matter of fact. But Afimyushka grew panicky and without saying anything to her mistress sent a messenger to Porphyry Vladimirich.

Judas arrived early the following day. Arina Petrovna was considerably worse. He questioned the servants minutely as to what Mamma had eaten and whether she had had too much, but was told that Arina Petrovna had scarcely touched any food for the last month and refused it altogether since the day before. Judas was grieved and expressed his grief appropriately and, before going in to Mamma, warmed himself by the stove in the maids’ room, like a good son, so as not to bring the cold air with him into the invalid’s room. And while he was at it he at once began to make arrangements (he had quite an uncanny nose for death). He asked if the priest was at home, so that one could send for him at once in case of emergency, inquired where Mamma’s chest with her papers stood and whether it was locked, and, having satisfied himself about the essentials, called in the cook and ordered his dinner.

“I don’t want much!” he said. “Have you a chicken to spare? Well, make me some chicken broth! Perhaps you have some salt meat—cook a little piece for me. Then a bit of something to go with it—and that will be plenty!”

Arina Petrovna lay on her back with her mouth open, breathing heavily. Her eyes were wide open; one arm had strayed from under the hareskin coverlet and remained poised in the air. She had evidently been listening to the sounds of her son’s arrival and perhaps she could hear the orders he was giving. The window curtains were drawn across so that the room was in semidarkness. The wicks in the sanctuary lamps had burned down and one could hear them crackle as they touched the water. The air was thick and nauseous; the overheated stove, the burning oil of the lamps and the odours of the sick-room made the

place unendurably stuffy. Porphiry Vladimirich in his felt boots glided like a snake towards his mother's bed; his tall lean figure swayed mysteriously in the twilight. Arina Petrovna watched him with apprehension, or perhaps it was surprise, and huddled herself together under her coverlet.

"It's me, Mamma," he said. "Why, you seem quite out of sorts today! Oh me, oh my! No wonder I couldn't sleep last night: I kept fidgeting and thinking to myself I must go and see how my friends at Pogorelka are getting on! As soon as I got up this morning I ordered a carriage-and-pair—and here I am!"

Porphiry Vladimirich tittered amiably, but Arina Petrovna made no answer and seemed to shrink together more and more under her coverlet.

"God willing you'll soon be well, Mamma!" Judas went on. "The chief thing is not to give in! Pull yourself together, jump out of bed, and take a brisk little walk round the room! Like this!"

Porphiry Vladimirich got up from his chair and showed her what a brisk little walk meant.

"Now then, let me draw the curtain away and have a look at you! Why, you look splendid, my dear! All you have to do is to cheer up and say your prayers and put on a pretty frock—and you can go to a dance straight away! Here, I have brought some holy water for you—have a sip!"

Porphiry Vladimirich pulled a small bottle out of his pocket, found a medicine glass on the table, poured out some of the water and gave it to the invalid. Arina Petrovna tried to raise her head but could not.

"I want the girls..." she moaned.

"There, now you are asking for the girls! Ah, Mamma, Mamma! Fancy your giving in so suddenly! You're just the tiniest bit out of sorts and you're losing your courage already! We'll do it all, we'll send a message to the girls, we'll call Petenka back from Petersburg, we'll do everything in good time! There's no hurry, you know; we've a long time before us yet! And a very jolly time too! When summer comes, we'll be going to the forest together to look for mushrooms, for wild strawberries and raspberries!

Or we'll drive to Dubrovino to catch carp; we'll have the old piebald harnessed and go trit-trot, trit-trot in the long droshky, jogging along ever so nicely!"

"I want the girls..." Arina Petrovna repeated miserably.

"They'll come right enough.... Just give us time, we'll call everyone, we shall all be here. We shall gather round you—you'll be like the mother-hen and we the chicks.... Cluck-cluck-cluck! You shall have all you want if you are a good girl. But it's not like a good girl to be ill! That's very naughty of you.... Dear me, dear me! You should set us an example and here's what you go and do! It isn't nice of you, my dear! Not nice of you at all!"

But hard as Porphiry Vladimirich tried to cheer up his darling Mamma with his little jokes, she grew weaker every hour. They sent to town for a doctor, and as the invalid kept fretting and asking for the girls, Judas wrote a letter to Anninka and Lubinka in which he drew a comparison between their conduct and his own, calling himself a true Christian and them—ingrates. The doctor came in the night but it was too late. Arina Petrovna "was done for", as the saying is, in one day. About four in the morning the last agony began, and at six Porphiry Vladimirich was kneeling by his mother's bedside wailing:

"Mamma! dearest! bless me!"

But Arina Petrovna did not hear. Her wide-open eyes gazed dully into space as though she were trying to understand something and could not.

Judas did not understand either. He did not understand that the yawning grave before him would be taking away his last link with the world of the living, the last creature with whom he could share the dust that filled him, and that henceforth that dust, finding no outlet, would gather within him till in the end it choked him.

With his usual fussiness he plunged into the mass of details that accompany death. He had requiem services sung, ordered Masses to be said for forty days, talked to the priest, shuffled along from one room to another, peeped into the dining-room where the coffin stood, crossed himself, raised his eyes to heaven and, getting up at night, walked noiselessly to the door to listen to the monotonous

reading of the psalms. He was pleasantly surprised to find that all this did not involve him in any extra expense because Arina Petrovna had in her lifetime put away a special sum for her funeral, and left precise instructions on how it was to be spent.

After the funeral Porphiry Vladimirich immediately set about putting his mother's affairs in order. Sorting out her papers he found at least ten different wills (in one of them she called him "disrespectful"), but they had all been written when Arina Petrovna was still a great lady and had never been put into legal form. Judas was therefore very much pleased that there was no need for him to prevaricate in declaring himself the only lawful heir to his mother's property. This property consisted of fifteen thousand rubles and a few scanty possessions, including the famous chaise that had once very nearly proved an apple of discord between mother and son. Arina Petrovna had been careful keeping her accounts separate from those of the girls, so that one could see at a glance what belonged to her and what to them. Judas immediately established his claims as heir, sealed the papers dealing with the orphans' estate and distributed among the servants his mother's scanty wardrobe. He sent to Golovlyovo the chaise and the two cows which had been put down by Arina Petrovna in the inventory under the heading "mine", and after the last requiem service went home.

"Wait for the owners," he said to the servants who had gathered in the hall to see him off. "If they come—they are welcome; if they don't, it's their own affair. I, for my part, have done all I could: I have put their accounts in order without concealing or omitting anything—I did it all openly and above-board in the sight of you all. My mother's capital belongs to me by law; the chaise and the two cows which I sent to Golovlyovo are also legally mine. I may even have left something of my own, but I don't grudge that; God himself tells us to give alms to orphans. I am sorry to have lost Mamma, she was a kind, thoughtful old lady! Here she had thought of you too, her servants, and left you her wardrobe. Ah, Mamma, Mamma! It wasn't nice of you, my dearest, to leave us all by ourselves! Oh well, since God chose that this should be,

we must submit to His holy will. Never mind us, so long as your soul is at rest!"

A second grave was soon added to the first. Porphiry Vladimirich took his son's predicament rather strangely. He received no papers and no letters from anyone so that he could not know anything about Petenka's trial, nor did he, in all probability, wish to know. Speaking generally, he was a man whose chief concern was to avoid worry and who had so deeply sunk into the mire of petty cares of the most contemptible self-preservation that his existence left behind it no trace of any kind. There are quite a few such people in the world; they all live isolated lives, not knowing how to attach themselves to anything and not caring to do so; they simply live from day to day and finally disappear like rain-bubbles bursting on the water's surface. They have no friends because friendship implies common interests; they have no business connections because their souls are too dead even for the deadly world of bureaucratic red tape. For thirty years Porphiry Vladimirich had puttered in a government office, and when one fine morning he disappeared no one noticed it.

And so he was the last to learn of the fate that had overtaken his son, after the news had spread among his servants. But even then he pretended not to know anything about it, so that when Yevpraxeya ventured to mention Petenka one day Judas waved his hands at her and said:

"No, no, no! I don't know, I haven't heard, and I don't wish to hear! I don't want to know of his dirty affairs."

But nevertheless the news reached him at last. A letter came from Petenka saying that he was about to leave for one of the distant provinces and asking whether Papa would continue sending him his allowance in these changed circumstances. For a whole day after this Porphiry Vladimirich was obviously perplexed; he wandered aimlessly from room to room, looked into the icon-room, kept crossing himself, and sighing. Towards evening, however, he brought himself to face the task and wrote as follows:

"My criminal son, Pyotr!

"As a loyal subject whose duty it is to respect the law I ought to have left your letter unanswered. But as a father

who is only human I cannot, from a feeling of compassion, refuse good advice to a child who through his own fault has hurled himself into a whirlpool of iniquity. And so, here is, briefly, my opinion on the subject. The punishment you are undergoing is severe but entirely deserved by you—this is the primary and the main point, which you must never lose sight of in your new life. As to your habits of self-indulgence you must abandon the very thought of them, for in your position it will only be a provocation to you and cause you to repine. You have already tasted the bitter fruit of conceit—try now to taste the fruit of humility, especially as there is nothing else left for you in the future. Do not complain against your punishment, for the authorities are not even punishing you, but merely providing you with the means of reforming your character. You must be grateful for this and do your best to expiate your deed—that should be your sole and constant concern, and not luxurious living, in which, by the way, I never indulge either, though I haven't offended against the law. So listen to this voice of reason and try and become a new man, completely new and regenerate, content with what your superiors think fit in their kindness to give towards your keep. And I, for my part, will pray the Giver of all blessings to grant you humility and fortitude. Early this morning, before writing these lines I went to church and prayed ardently about it. I bless you on your new path and remain

“Your indignant but still loving father,
“*Porphiry Golovlyov.*”

History does not say whether this letter ever reached Petenka; a month after it was posted, Porphiry Vladimich received an official notification that his son had been taken ill and had died in a hospital on the way before reaching his destination.

Judas found himself alone in the world now, but he still failed to grasp that after this new loss he was cut adrift altogether with nothing to keep him company except his own empty talk. This happened soon after Arina

Petrovna's death, when he was completely engrossed in accounts and calculations. He went through her papers, counting every penny and tracing its connection with the orphans' pennies—wishing, as he said, neither to lose what was his own nor to take what did not belong to him. While he was engaged in all this fussing it never occurred to him to ask himself, why he was doing it and who would enjoy the fruits of his labour. From morning till night he toiled at his writing-table, criticising his mother's arrangements or indulging in flights of fancy; he was so busy that he gradually came to neglect the accounts of his own estate.

Everything in the house sank into silence. The servants who had always preferred to spend the time in their own quarters abandoned the house almost entirely, and when they were about, they walked on tiptoe and spoke in whispers. A sense of doom seemed to hang over the house and its master, inspiring a superstitious fear. The twilight that enveloped Judas was destined to grow deeper and deeper every day.

During Lent, when the theatres were closed, Anninka arrived at Golovlyovo. Lubinka could not come with her, she said, because she had signed a contract some time before for the whole of Lent and was to give concerts at Romny, Izyum, Kremenchug, etc., singing all her music-hall repertoire.

Anninka had matured considerably during her short career as an actress. She was no longer the naive, anaemic and rather listless girl who used to wander about aimlessly from room to room at Dubrovino and at Pogorelka, swaying her body clumsily and humming under her breath. Her character was quite formed now; she had a free and unceremonious manner and one could unmistakably tell from the first glance that she was never at a loss for a word. Her appearance, too, had changed and gave quite a pleasant surprise to Porphiry Vladimirich. He saw before him a tall, well-built woman with a handsome rosy face, protuberant grey eyes, a high, well-developed bosom, and lovely ash-blonde hair that lay in a heavy coil on the back of her neck—a woman who was evidently fully conscious of being *la belle Hélène* for whom all

the officers were fated to pine. She arrived at Golovlyovo in the early morning and immediately withdrew to one of the bedrooms, and appeared for breakfast in a magnificent silk gown with a rustling train which she skilfully steered between the dining-room chairs. Although Judas loved his God above all things, this did not prevent him from having a taste for good-looking women, especially if they were on the big side. And so he first of all blessed Anninka, then kissed her soundly on both cheeks and in so doing cast such a strange sidelong glance at her bosom that Anninka smiled to herself.

They sat down to breakfast; Anninka raised both arms and stretched herself.

"It's fearfully dull here, Uncle!" she began, yawning slightly.

"There now! You haven't looked about you yet and you start saying it's dull! Stay with us for a bit, then we shall see: you may find it gay after all," answered Porphyry Vladimirich with a sudden oily glitter in his eyes.

"No, it's an awful bore! What is there here? Snow all round, no neighbours.... There's a regiment quartered near you, I believe?"

"There's the regiment and we have neighbours too, though, to tell the truth, it doesn't interest me much. But, perhaps, if...."

Porphyry Vladimirich glanced at her but did not finish his sentence and merely grunted. Perhaps he broke off on purpose, so as to rouse her feminine curiosity; in any case the same hardly perceptible smile flitted over her face again. She leaned her elbows on the table and looked with some attention at Yevpraxeya who was wiping the glasses. Yevpraxeya's cheeks were flushed and she kept glancing at Anninka sulkily with her large, dull eyes.

"This is my new housekeeper... a hard-working soul," Porphyry Vladimirich remarked.

Anninka nodded slightly and began humming, "*Ah! ah! que j'aime... que j'aime... les mili-mili-militaires,*" unconsciously swaying her hips as she did so.

There was a silence. Judas, with his eyes cast down meekly, slowly sipped his tea.

"Fearfully dull!" Anninka yawned again.

"Dull again! That's all you have to say! Just you wait till you've been with us for a bit. . . . We'll have the sledge ready for you presently—you can go sleighing to your heart's content."

"Uncle, why didn't you go into the hussars?"

"Because, my dear, every man has his own task appointed him by God. One is to be a hussar, another—a government official, a third—a tradesman, a fourth. . . ."

"Oh, yes, a fourth, a fifth, a sixth—I have forgotten! And it's God who arranges it all, does He?"

"Yes, He does! This is nothing to laugh at, my dear. You know what it says in the Gospel: if it be not God's will. . . ."

"That's about the hair? Yes, I know that too. But the trouble is, everyone wears false hair now, and no provision was made for that, I believe. By the way, Uncle, see what lovely hair I have! Isn't it beautiful?"

Porphyry Vladimirich walked up to her (on tiptoe for some reason) and held the rich coil in his hand. Yevpraxeya bent forward and not letting go her saucer of tea asked, a piece of sugar between her teeth:

"False, I expect?"

"No it isn't, it's my own hair, I'll let it down to show you some day, Uncle!"

"Yes, beautiful hair!" Judas praised it, almost slobbering in a sensual smirk; but remembering that one ought really to scorn such temptations, he added, "Ah, you grasshopper! There's nothing but beautiful hair and fine dresses on your mind and it doesn't even occur to you to ask about what really matters!"

"Oh, yes, about Grandmamma! But she died, didn't she?"

"Yes, she passed away, my dear! And what a beautiful death it was! So peaceful, so quiet that no one heard her go. That was indeed a Christian end to her earthly life! She remembered everyone, blessed us all, called for a priest, took the sacrament . . . and suddenly she felt so serene, so perfectly serene! She herself said so, the dear. 'Why, how serene I feel all at once,' she said. And

imagine, as soon as she had said it she began to sigh. She sighed once and twice and three times—and behold!—she was no more!”

Judas got up, turned to the icon, folded his hands and said a prayer. Tears actually came into his eyes: he had told such a beautiful lie! Anninka was evidently not of the sentimental sort. True, she grew thoughtful for a moment but it was for quite a different reason.

“Do you remember, Uncle,” she said, “how she used to feed us, my sister and me, on sour milk when we were little? Not these last years . . . she was very good then . . . but when she was still rich?”

“Come, come, you mustn’t bring up old scores! They gave you sour milk, but see what a fine girl you have grown, bless you! Will you go to visit her grave?”

“Very well, let us.”

“Only do you know what: you’d better purify yourself first!”

“How do you mean . . . purify myself?”

“Well, after all, you know . . . you are an actress. Was your Grandmamma happy about it, do you think? So before going to the grave you’d do well to attend Mass and be purified! I’ll order the service early tomorrow and you can go after that.”

Absurd as Judas’s suggestion was, Anninka was disconcerted for a moment. But then she frowned angrily and said sharply:

“No, I’ll go as I am . . . I’ll go now.”

“I don’t know, please yourself. But my advice is, let us go to early service tomorrow, then have a bit of breakfast, then order a pair of horses and a carriage and drive there together. You would be purified and your grandmother’s soul would . . .”

“Oh, Uncle, what a silly you are, really! You talk such utter nonsense and insist on it too!”

“Oh, you don’t like it, do you? Well, you must forgive me—I am a plain-spoken man! I don’t approve of lies. I tell the truth to others and am ready to hear it too. It sometimes goes against the grain, it tastes bitter—but yet one has to hear it. One ought to hear it, because it is the truth! That’s how it is, my dear! Stay with us a bit,

live our way—and you will see for yourself that it's better than going from fair to fair with a guitar."

"Heavens! What are you saying, Uncle! With a guitar!"

"Well, it's all the same. With a tambourine, perhaps. However, you were the first to insult me, calling me silly, and it's only right that an old man like me should tell you the truth."

"Very well, let it be the truth, we won't talk of it. Tell me, please, did Grandmother leave any property?"

"Of course! But the lawful heir was there to receive it."

"That is yourself . . . well, so much the better. Is she buried here, at Golovlyovo?"

"No, in her parish, near Pogorelka. It was her own wish."

"I'll go then. Can I hire some horses here, Uncle?"

"Why hire? We have horses of our own. You are not a stranger, you know! You are my niece . . . that's what you are," Porphiry Vladimirich said, smirking like a good relative. "A carriage . . . a pair of horses. I am not destitute, thank heaven! And hadn't I better come with you? We would go to the grave and then call at Pogorelka. We'd look into this and that and think things over and have a good talk about it all. . . . You have a nice little estate, you know; it has some very good spots!"

"No, I'd better go by myself. . . . Why should you? . . . By the way, Petenka is dead, too, isn't he?"

"He is dead, my dear, yes, Petenka is dead too. On the one hand I am sorry for him, so sorry I could weep, but on the other—it's his own fault. He was always disrespectful to his father—and so God punished him! And what God has arranged in His wisdom it isn't for us to change."

"Naturally, we cannot change it. But I keep thinking, Uncle, how is it you aren't afraid to live?"

"And why should I be afraid? See how much grace I have round me?" Judas made a sweeping gesture at the icons. "There is grace here, and in my study too, and my icon-room is a perfect paradise! You see how many defenders I have."

"But even so. . . . You are always alone . . . it's frightening!"

"And if I feel frightened I kneel down and pray—and that puts me right at once. And what is there to fear? In the daytime it's light, and in the night I have sanctuary lamps burning in every room. From the outside it looks as though there were a dance in the house. A dance, indeed! God's holy saints—that's all my company!"

"Do you know, Petenka wrote to us just before he died."

"Well, you are his kith and kin! It's a good thing that at least he hadn't lost all family feeling."

"Yes, he wrote to us. After the trial, when he had been sentenced. He wrote that he had lost three thousand rubles at cards and that you wouldn't give him the money. You are rich, Uncle, aren't you?"

"It is easy to count money in other people's pockets, my dear. Sometimes we imagine that a man is simply rolling in gold, but if one looks into it, he has only enough to buy lamp oil and a votive candle—and even that isn't his but God's!"

"Well, in that case we are richer than you. We subscribed something ourselves, and made our gentlemen friends subscribe—we collected six hundred rubles altogether and sent the money to him."

"What 'gentlemen friends' are those?"

"Why, Uncle! We are actresses, you know! You have just been suggesting it yourself that I should 'purify myself'!"

"I don't like it when you talk like that!"

"Well, there's nothing for it. You may like it or not but what's done can't be undone. According to you, this too is from God!"

"Don't blaspheme, at least. You may say whatever you like but . . . I forbid you to blaspheme! Where did you send the money?"

"I don't remember. To some little town. . . . He gave us the address."

"That's strange. If there was any money, I should have received it after his death! He could not have spent it all at once! I don't know. I haven't received anything. I expect those wretched warders and guards pocketed it!"

"Oh, we are not asking it back—I merely mentioned it in passing. But say what you will, Uncle, it's dreadful that a man should perish because of three thousand rubles!"

"But it isn't because of three thousand. We only fancy that it is, and keep repeating 'three thousand, three thousand!' But God...."

Judas had just warmed up to the subject and was going to explain in detail how God ... Providence ... unseen ways ... and all the rest of it. But Anninka yawned unceremoniously and said:

"It is fearfully dull here, Uncle!"

This time Porphiry Vladimirich was really offended and grew silent. They walked up and down the dining-room side by side for some time; Anninka kept yawning and Porphiry Vladimirich crossed himself in every corner. At last they were told that the carriage was ready and there followed the usual comedy of seeing off one of the family. Porphiry Vladimirich put on his coat, came out on to the front steps, kissed Anninka, shouted at the servants, "Mind you wrap up her feet properly," and "Are you sure you've taken the frumenty? Dear, oh dear! Don't you forget it!" and he made the sign of the cross in the air.

Anninka went to her grandmother's grave, asked the priest to hold a requiem service, and when the choristers mournfully intoned "eternal memory", she shed a few tears. It was melancholy scenery all round. The church beside which Arina Petrovna was buried was a poor one; the plaster had peeled off the walls in many places, showing big patches of the brickwork underneath; the bell had a dull, muffled sound; the priest's vestments were shabby; the churchyard was covered with deep snow that had to be shovelled away before one could reach Arina Petrovna's grave; there was no tombstone yet, but only a plain white cross that did not even bear any inscription. The church stood in a lonely spot, with no village near it; the priest's, the deacon's and the sexton's time-darkened cottages were huddled together beside it, and a desolate snowy desert stretched all round, with some kind of dry brushwood showing in places on the surface.

A strong March wind tore at the priest's vestments and carried away the sounds of the singing.

"Who would have thought, Madam, that beneath this humble cross, beside our poor church rests she, who had once been the richest landowner in the district!" said the priest when the service was over.

At these words Anninka wept again. She recalled the line "On festive board a coffin stands",* and her tears flowed and flowed. Then she went to the priest's cottage, had a talk with his wife, drank some tea, again recalled "And all behold death's pallid hand"*—and cried long and bitterly.

No word had been sent to Pogorelka about her arrival and the house had not even been heated. Without taking off her fur coat Anninka walked through the rooms and only stopped for a minute in her grandmother's bedroom and in the icon-room. Arina Petrovna's bedstead had not been tidied and was still heaped with greasy feather beds and a few pillows without pillow-cases. Bits of paper were scattered on the writing-table; the floor had not been swept, and everything was covered with a thick layer of dust. Anninka sat down in her grandmother's armchair and sank into thought. At first memories of her past came before her mind; they were replaced by images of the present. The memories were fragmentary and flitted rapidly by; the images of the present had greater vividness. It seemed only yesterday that she had yearned for freedom and thought Pogorelka a hateful place—and now her heart was suddenly filled with a painful longing to live for a while in this place she had hated so much. It was quiet here—uncomfortable and unattractive, but quiet, so quiet that everything might have been dead around her. There was plenty of air and space: the fields stretched into the distance and she felt she wanted to run there—to run without purpose, without looking back, simply so as to breathe more deeply and to feel her breast aglow.

* "On festive board a coffin stands.... And all behold death's pallid hand." From G. R. Derzhavin's ode "On the Death of Prince Meshchersky."—*Ed.*

And *there*, in the half-nomadic surroundings which she had just left and to which she *had* to return—what awaited her there? And what had she brought away from there? Memories of smelly hotels, of never ending din coming from the restaurant and billiard-room, of unkempt and unwashed waiters, of rehearsals on a draughty, half-dark stage among the painted cloth scenery that one could not touch without disgust, in the cold and the damp . . . that was all! And then officers, lawyers, cynical language, empty bottles, wine-stained table-cloths, clouds of smoke, and noise, noise, noise! The things they said to her! The shameless way they touched her! Especially that man with the inflamed eyes, a big moustache, a voice hoarse with drinking, and a smell of the stables. . . . Oh, the things he said to her! Anninka shuddered at the memory and closed her eyes. Recovering herself she heaved a sigh and walked into the icon-room. Very few icons remained in the stand—only those which had *unquestionably* belonged to her mother. Judas, as Arina Petrovna's heir, had taken to Golovlyovo all those that were her grandmother's. The empty spaces left in the icon-stand looked like eye sockets with the eyes gouged out. There were no sanctuary lamps either—Judas had taken them all; only a bit of a yellow wax candle remained, stuck desolately in its tiny metal holder.

"The master wanted to take the stand as well and kept asking if it was really part of your mother's dowry," Afimyushka informed her.

"Well, he might as well have taken it. Tell me, Afimyushka—did Grandmamma suffer much before she died?"

"Not very, she was not quite two days in bed. She seemed just to pine away. She wasn't ill properly, or anything. She hardly spoke at all, except that she asked for you and your sister once or twice."

"Then it was Porphiry Vladimirich who took away the icons?"

"Yes, it was him. He said they were his Mamma's icons. He also took the chaise and two cows. He must have seen from your grandmother's papers that they weren't yours but hers. He wanted to grab one horse too but Fedulych

wouldn't let him. 'It's our horse,' he said, 'it has always belonged to Pogorelka,'—so he didn't dare take it."

Anninka walked about the yard, looked into the out-buildings, the threshing-yard, and the cattle shed. Her "working capital"—some twenty lean cows and three horses—stood there in a bog of manure. She asked for some bread, saying, "I'll pay," and gave a piece to every cow. Then the dairymaid invited her into the cottage where a jar of milk had been placed on the table and where a new-born calf was housed in the corner by the stove behind a low wooden partition. Anninka drank some milk and running up to the calf kissed it impulsively. But she at once wiped her lips in disgust, saying that the calf had a horrid muzzle, all wet and slimy. She took three yellow notes from her purse, gave them to the old servants and made ready to go.

"What are you going to do?" she asked old Fedulych before she stepped into the carriage. In his capacity of elder, he escorted the young mistress, his arms folded on his chest.

"What is there to do! We'll just live," Fedulych answered simply. Anninka felt sad again: she fancied there was a note of irony in his words. She stood still for a minute and said with a sigh:

"Well, good-bye!"

"And we had thought you'd come back and live with us!" Fedulych said.

"No . . . what's the good! Never mind . . . carry on!"

Tears flowed from her eyes again, and everyone else wept too. It was all so strange: she thought there was nothing she regretted here, nothing even she could recall affectionately—and yet she was crying. And the others too: nothing had been said beyond the most commonplace things, and yet they suddenly felt depressed and sorry to see her go. They helped her into the carriage, wrapped her up, and all of them sighed sorrowfully.

"Good luck to you!" she heard behind her when the carriage moved.

As she was driving past the churchyard she told the coachman to stop and walked all by herself along the path that had been cleared to the grave. It was almost

dark and lamps had been lit in the church cottages. She stood clutching the cross with one hand, but she did not cry and only rocked herself to and fro. She was not thinking of anything in particular, she could not have formed a definite thought, but she felt wretched, utterly wretched, not at the thought of her grandmother, but of herself. She stood there, unconsciously rocking and swaying to and fro for some fifteen minutes, and suddenly she pictured Lubinka, who at that very moment perhaps was trilling away in a bawdy company somewhere in Kremenchug:

*Ah, ah! que j'aime, que j'aime!
Que j'aime les mili-mili-mili-taires!*

She almost collapsed. Running to the carriage she stepped into it and told the coachman to drive as fast as he could to Golovlyovo.

Anninka returned to her uncle depressed and subdued. This did not prevent her, however, from feeling a bit hungry (in the excitement her uncle had not given her anything to take with her, not as much as a chicken) and she was very glad to find the table laid for tea. Porphiry Vladimirich of course immediately opened a conversation:

"Well, so you've been there?"

"Yes, I have."

"And you prayed at the grave? Had a requiem sung?"

"Yes, I had."

"So the priest was at home, was he?"

"Of course he was. How else could I have had a requiem?"

"Yes, yes. . . . And the two servitors? Did they sing 'eternal memory'?"

"They did."

"Yes. Eternal memory to her, bless her! She was a solicitous old soul, always thinking of her family."

Judas got up, turned to the icons and said a prayer.

"Well, and how did you find things at Pogorelka? All well?"

"I really don't know. Everything seems to be in its place."

"That's just it—'seems'! It always 'seems', but when you look into the matter, you see that this is rotten, and that is awry. . . . That's how we get our notions of other people's wealth too: it 'seems' to us they must be rich. Though I must say you have a nice little estate; Mamma's settled you very comfortably and spent a good deal of her own money on it too. . . . Well, it's only right to help orphans!"

Listening to these praises Anninka could not resist the temptation of teasing her charitable uncle.

"And why did you take two cows from Pogorelka, Uncle?" she asked.

"Cows? Which cows? Do you mean Chernavka and Privedenka? Why, my dear, they belonged to Mamma."

"And you are her lawful heir! Well, keep them! Would you like me to send you a calf we have as well?"

"There, there! Now you are in a temper! But answer me, just tell me whose cows they were, do you think?"

"How should I know! They were at Pogorelka."

"But I do know; I have proof that they were Mamma's cows. I found an inventory in her own handwriting and it distinctly said there 'mine'."

"Oh, let's drop it. It's not worth talking about."

"Now there's a horse at Pogorelka—a patchy one—well, about that horse I am not certain. I believe it's Mamma's but I don't know for sure. And what I don't know I cannot speak of."

"Let's leave the subject, Uncle."

"No, why leave it? I am a straightforward man, my dear—I like to have everything plain and above-board! And why not speak of it? No one likes to lose what's his; you don't like it, nor do I—so we must talk it over. And while we are at it, I'll tell you straight out: I don't want what belongs to others but I am not going to give away what's mine! Because even though you are not strangers to me, I. . . ."

"You even took the icons!" Anninka could not resist saying again.

"I took the icons and everything else that belongs to me as the lawful heir."

"The icon-stand seems all in holes now. . . ."

"Well, there's nothing for it! You must pray before it as it is. God wants your prayers and not the icon-stand. If you approach Him in all sincerity, your prayers will reach Him however poor the icon. But if you merely wag your tongue while you look round and flirt and curtsy—not even good icons will save you!"

Nevertheless Judas stood up and thanked God for his own "good" icons.

"And if you don't like the old icon-stand, have a new one made. Or put other icons in the place of those I've taken. It was Mamma who had bought and put them in, and now it's up to you to provide new ones!"

This way of looking at the matter seemed to him so simple and reasonable that he tittered with pleasure.

"Tell me, please, what have I to do now?" Anninka asked.

"Don't you hurry. Rest first, make yourself comfortable and have a good sleep, and then we'll consider it and talk it over and see what can be done. Perhaps between us we'll think of something."

"We are of age, aren't we?"

"Yes, you are. You can do what you like with yourselves and with your property."

"Thank heaven for that, anyway."

"My congratulations!"

Porphyry Vladimirich went up to her and tried to kiss her.

"How strange you are, Uncle! You are always kissing!"

"Why shouldn't I kiss you? You are not a stranger—you are my little niece! It's family feeling in me, my dear! I don't mind what I do for my relatives! They may be third or fourth cousins—it's all one to me. . . ."

"You'd better tell me what I ought to do. I have to go to town, haven't I, and see to things?"

"That's right, we'll go to town and see to everything—all in good time. But first you must stay with us for a bit and have a nice rest. You are not at an hotel, thank heaven, but at your own uncle's. We have plenty of good things to eat, and tea to drink and jam if you want something sweet. And if there's any dish you don't like—ask for another! Ask, insist! If you don't want cabbage soup,

tell them to bring you some chicken broth. Cutlets, ducklings, suckling-pigs. . . . Get hold of Yevpraxeya! By the way, Yevpraxeya, I have just boasted of suckling-pigs but I don't really know—have we any?"

Yevpraxeya, who was at that moment holding a saucer of hot tea in front of her mouth, sniffed affirmatively.

"There, you see, we have suckling-pigs as well. That means you may ask for whatever your heart desires! So that's how it is!"

Judas, like a good relative, patted Anninka slightly on the knees, letting his hand rest there for a moment, by accident no doubt. Anninka instinctively drew away.

"But I have to go, you know!" she said.

"That's just what I am speaking about. We'll talk it over and consider it all, and then we'll go. We'll go with God's blessing, having said our prayers, and not like a shot out of a popgun! The longest way round is the shortest way home, you know! If there's a fire, one has to hurry, but thank heaven, our house isn't burning! Lubinka, now, she has to hurry to the fair, but you needn't. Oh, I was going to ask you: will you make your home at Pogorelka now?"

"No, there's nothing for me to do at Pogorelka."

"That's just what I was going to say. Come and settle with me! We'll get along very nicely—have a splendid time, in fact!"

Judas looked at Anninka with such oily eyes as he said this that she felt uncomfortable.

"No, Uncle, I couldn't settle with you. It's too dull here."

"Ah, you silly, silly girl! Why d'you keep repeating it? 'Dull, dull,' you say, but you can't really tell why it is dull. If one is busy and knows how to occupy oneself, one is never dull, my dear. I, for instance, simply do not see how the time goes. On week-days there's work to do: I must go and have a look at that and a peep at this, to have a word with one and a chat with another—and the day is gone! And on holidays I go to church. You could do the same. Live with us—you'll find something to do; and if not—play 'fools' with Yevpraxeya, or order a sledge and drive about to your heart's content! And when summer

comes we'll go mushrooming, have a picnic on the grass in the forest!"

"No, Uncle, it's no use your offering it."

"Do stay, really!"

"No. But I tell you what: I am tired after the journey, so may I go to bed?"

"Oh, yes, you may go bye-byes! I have a soft little bed ready for you, and everything is arranged for you properly. If you want to go bye-byes—sleep, bless you! But do think it over: it would be far better for you to stay with us at Golovlyovo!"

Anninka spent a restless night. She was still possessed by the nervous uneasiness that had come over her at Pogorelka. There are moments when a person who has so far merely *existed* suddenly begins to understand that he *lives* and that moreover there is some canker in his life. He does not as a rule clearly see how and why it formed and in most cases ascribes it to wrong causes; but he does not really care about the causes—it is sufficient for him that the canker is there. This sudden revelation is equally painful to everyone, but its subsequent effects vary according to the person's temperament. It regenerates some people, inspiring them with the resolution to begin a new life, on a new basis; in others it merely causes temporary distress, leading to no change for the better but making them even more miserable for the moment than those whose disturbed conscience conjures up for them at least some glimmerings of a brighter future as a result of their new resolutions.

Anninka was not one of those who are regenerated by a revelation of the evil of their lives; but, being an intelligent woman, she saw perfectly well that there was all the difference in the world between those vague dreams of earning her own living that had prompted her to leave Pogorelka in the first instance and her position as a provincial actress. Instead of a quiet, hard-working life she had let herself in for a turbulent existence of continual merry-making, brazen cynicism, and aimless and never ending hustle. Instead of hardships and privations which she had once been ready to accept she had found a

comparative comfort and even luxury, but of a kind that she now could not recall without blushing. And all this substitution had somehow taken place quite imperceptibly to herself: it was as though she had been going to some good place but by mistake had opened a wrong door. Her dreams had certainly been very modest. How often, day-dreaming in her attic at Pogorelka, she pictured herself as a serious, hard-working girl, longing to improve her mind, bravely enduring privations and poverty for the sake of the ideal (though the word "ideal" hardly had any definite meaning for her); but no sooner did she embark upon the wide road of independence than she found herself in surrounding which shattered her dreams at once. Serious work does not come to one of itself: determined effort is needed to find it, and previous training, which, even if imperfect, would help one at any rate to look in the right direction. Anninka was not fitted for such effort either by temperament or by education. Easily carried away, she was not one, however, to devote herself to a thing whole-heartedly, while her store of knowledge was insufficient to qualify her for any serious profession. Her education had been a mixture, so to speak, of the boarding-school and the comic opera, the odds being rather in favour of the latter. It included, in chaotic disorder, the problem about a hundred flying geese, the scarf dance, the preaching of Pierre of Picardy, the escapades of Helen of Troy, Derzhavin's "Ode to Felitsa",* and feelings of gratitude to the principals and patrons of young ladies' boarding-schools. This bewildering hotch-potch (apart from which she might have justly described herself as a *tabula rasa*) was difficult to make head or tail of, to say nothing of using it as a starting-point for practical life. It was not love of work that this education fostered, but love of gaiety, a desire to be popular in society, to listen to gallantries, and, generally speaking, to plunge into the rushing and sparkling whirl of the so-called world of fashion.

Had she been more introspective, she would have

* "Ode to Felitsa"—G. R. Derzhavin's famous ode glorifying Catherine the Great.—*Ed.*

realised even in those early days at Pogorelka when she made her first vague plans for earning her living, regarding it as a kind of deliverance from Egyptian captivity, that she was dreaming not so much of work as of being surrounded by congenial people and spending her time in intelligent conversation. Of course the people of her dreams were wise and their talk was serious and high-minded, but anyway it was the festive side of life that was in the foreground. The poverty she pictured was clean and tidy, the privations meant simply an absence of luxury. And so when in reality her hopes of work materialised in her being offered an engagement as a comic-opera singer in a provincial theatre, the disparity did not make her hesitate long. She hastily polished up her school information about Helen's relations to Menelaus, looked up a few biographical details about the magnificent Prince of Tavrída* and decided that this was quite enough for acting *La belle Hélène* and the *Grand Duchess of Herolstein* in provincial towns and at fairs. To appease her conscience she recalled how a student she had met in Moscow kept talking of "sacred art"; she made these words her motto all the more readily because they lent a certain seemliness to her action and provided her with an excuse for entering upon a career to which she was instinctively and overwhelmingly attracted.

Her new surroundings threw her off her balance. Alone, with nobody to advise her, no experience and no conscious purpose in life, with nothing but her temperament and her thirst for excitement, glamour, and adulation, she soon found herself caught up in a chaotic whirl with a multitude of people round her, succeeding one another at random. These people differed so widely in character and convictions that her reasons for being friends with this or that one could not have been the same, and yet they all

* *Prince of Tavrída*—G. A. Potyomkin (1739-1791), a statesman and favourite of Catherine the Great, had the title conferred on him in 1783 for annexing the Crimea (Tavrída) to Russia. In 1867, S. Shubinsky published a book entitled *A Collection of Anecdotes about Prince Potyomkin with Biographical Data and Historical Commentary*, which is implied here by the author.—Ed.

formed her circle—which suggested that, strictly speaking, there could be no question of “reasons” about it at all. Obviously, therefore, her life had become a kind of roadside inn, at the gates of which anyone might knock if he felt young, gay, and fairly well off. Obviously, too, it was not a question of *selecting* a congenial set of people but of attaching herself to any set to escape solitude. In truth her “sacred art” had landed her in a cesspool but she lived in such a giddy whirl that she failed to see it. Neither the waiters’ unwashed faces, nor the slimy and filthy backdrop, the noise, stench, and babble at the inns and hotels, nor her admirers’ insolent behaviour—nothing could sober her. She even failed to notice that she was always in the company of men and that some impassable barrier had arisen between her and women of *definite social standing*.

Her visit to Golovlyovo did sober her for a moment. Something had been gnawing at her ever since the morning, almost from the moment she arrived. Being of an impressionable nature, she very quickly assimilated new experiences and as quickly adapted herself to any situation. And so, as soon as she arrived at Golovlyovo she suddenly felt she was “the young mistress”. She recalled that she had something of her own: her house, her family graves; she wanted to see her old surroundings once more and to breathe again the atmosphere that she had only a short time before been so eager to flee. But this feeling was bound to be shattered at the first contact with the Golovlyovo life. She was like a person who comes with a friendly expression on his face into the company of people he had not seen for some time and suddenly notices that they all regard his friendliness in a rather peculiar way. Judas’s nasty sidelong glance at her bosom at once reminded her that she was already burdened with a past which was not easily shaken off. When, after the naive questions of the Pogorelka servants, the priest’s and his wife’s meaningful sighs and Judas’s admonition, she was at last left alone and considered at leisure the impressions of the day, she saw quite clearly that the “young mistress” of before had gone for ever; that henceforth she was nothing but an actress of a miserable provincial theatre,

and that in Russia an actress was regarded as little better than a harlot.

So far she had lived as in a dream. She appeared half-naked in *La belle Hélène*, acted the drunken Perichole, sang shameless couplets in the *Grand Duchess of Herolstein*, and was positively sorry that *l'amour* and *la chose* were not shown on the stage, picturing to herself how seductively she could wriggle her hips and with what *chic* she could manoeuvre her train. But it had never occurred to her to give serious thought to what she was doing. She had only been anxious to do everything "prettily" and "with *chic*", and so as to please the officers of the local regiment. She never asked herself what it all meant, and what kind of sensations her wriggings produced in the officers. They formed the most important section of the audience and she knew that her success depended upon them. They came backstage, knocked without ceremony at her dressing-room door while she was half-dressed, called her by pet names—and she regarded it all as a mere form, as an inevitable part of her trade, and merely asked herself whether she behaved "prettily" in those surroundings. So far she had never felt that either her soul or her body was public property. But now that for a moment she became a "young mistress" again, she was suddenly overwhelmed with disgust. It was as though she had been stripped of her clothes and brought out naked for all to see and she felt all over her body the vile breaths smelling of drink and of the stables, the touch of moist hands and slobbering lips; it seemed to her that eyes clouded with animal lust wandered senselessly over the curves of her naked body, demanding, as it were, an answer from her: What is *la chose*?

Where was she to turn? Where could she leave the burden of her past weighing down so heavily on her shoulders? This question darted hopelessly in her mind, but it only darted, not finding and indeed not even seeking an answer. After all, this was also a kind of dream; the life she had been leading was a dream and her awakening just now was a dream too. She was depressed, overwrought—that was all. It would pass. One has happy moments and bitter ones—that's how it always is. Both

joy and bitterness glide over the surface of life without in the least changing its established routine. In order to change life's course, much effort is needed as well as courage, both moral and physical. It is almost like suicide. A man may be cursing his life, he may feel certain that death means liberation for him, yet the instrument of death trembles in his hand, the knife glides over his throat, the pistol aimed at the forehead goes off lower down, merely disfiguring him. It is the same thing here, but more difficult still. Here too one has to destroy one's former life, but in doing so one must remain alive. In ordinary suicide "non-being" is achieved by a momentary pull at the trigger, but in that special case of suicide the thing called "regeneration" is achieved through strenuous, almost ascetic self-discipline. And the end is "non-being" just the same, because an existence consisting of nothing but efforts at self-control, abstentions and privations, cannot be called life. Those whose will is weakened, who have been demoralised by easy living, feel giddy at the very prospect of such "regeneration", and so, turning away and shutting their eyes, they instinctively take up the beaten track once more, ashamed of their own cowardice and full of self-reproach.

Ah, a life of work is a great thing! But only people of character, or those who are doomed to labour as a kind of curse for some inborn sin, take to it. They alone are not afraid of it: the first, because they understand the meaning of work and its possibilities, and are able to find enjoyment in it; the second, because for them work is a natural duty that becomes a habit.

It never entered Anninka's head to settle at Pogorelka or at Golovlyovo, and matters were much simplified for her by the fact that she had business obligations which she was determined to keep. She was on a holiday and she had planned her time beforehand, fixing a day for leaving Golovlyovo. People of weak character find the external forms of life a great help to them in bearing its burdens. In cases of difficulty they instinctively cling to those forms, finding in them a justification for themselves. That was precisely what Anninka did: she decided to leave Golovlyovo as soon as possible and, if her uncle pestered

her too much, to say to him that she had to be back on a set date.

Waking up the next morning she walked through all the rooms of the huge Golovlyovo house. Everything seemed deserted and comfortless, everywhere there was a sense of death and desolation. The thought of settling in this house for good quite frightened her. "Not for anything!" she repeated to herself with strange emotion. "Never!"

Porphiry Vladimirich greeted her that morning with his usual kindness, from which it was impossible to tell whether he meant to be affectionate or was after one's blood.

"Well, Miss Hurry-Scurry, have you had a good night? Where will you be hurrying-scurrying to now?" He smiled.

"It's quite true I must hurry, Uncle: I am on my holiday, you know, and must be back in time."

"You mean—back to your clowning again? I won't let you go!"

"You may let me or not, I'll go just the same."

Judas sadly shook his head.

"And what would your Grandmamma have said?" he asked in a tone of gentle reproach.

"Grandmamma knew. And what queer expressions you use, Uncle! Yesterday it was going with a guitar about the fairs, today you talk of clowning. I won't have you talk to me like this, do you hear?"

"Aha! the truth isn't to your taste, is it? And as for me, I love the truth! I think, if it's the truth. . . ."

"No, no, no, I don't want it! I don't want either truth or untruth from you! Do you hear? I won't have you talk like that!"

"There, there! We've lost our temper! Come, let's have breakfast, you grasshopper! I expect the samovar has long been snoring and snorting on the table."

With his jokes and laughter Porphiry Vladimirich wanted to smoothe out the impression left on Anninka by the word "clowning", and in token of peace, he tried to put his arm round her waist, but Anninka thought it all so silly and nasty that she drew away in disgust from his caress.

"I mean it, Uncle, I must hurry," she said.

"Come and let us have a cup of tea first, and then we'll talk."

"But why must we drink tea first? Why can't we talk now?"

"Because you mustn't ask questions! Because everything must be done at the proper time. First one thing, then another. First we'll drink tea and chat, and then talk business. There's plenty of time."

There was no defeating this hopeless twaddle, and Anninka had to give in. They sat down to breakfast; Judas wasted time in a most provoking way, taking tiny sips of tea, crossing himself, slapping his thighs, chatting about dear Mamma, and so on.

"Well, now let us talk," he said at last. "How long do you mean to stay?"

"I can't stay more than a week. I must stop in Moscow on my way back."

"A week, my dear, is a long time: one may do a great deal in a week, or very little—according to how one tackles it."

"We had better do a great deal, Uncle."

"That's just what I am saying. One may do a great deal, or very little. Sometimes one wants to do a great deal but it comes to very little; and sometimes one doesn't seem to be doing much but suddenly finds that with God's help he has finished all there was to do. Here you are hurrying away, you say you have to go to Moscow, but if one asked you why—you couldn't find an answer. But I think you had better see to your affairs instead of going to Moscow."

"I must go to Moscow because I want to see if I can get an engagement for the two of us there. And as to my affairs, you have just said yourself that one can do a great deal in a week."

"That depends on how you tackle the business, my dear. If you tackle it properly, it will all go smoothly and evenly, but if you don't there will be hitches and delays."

"Then please direct me, Uncle!"

"That's just it. When you need me, it's 'please direct

me, Uncle', and when you don't, you are bored with your uncle and want to run away from him! Isn't that so?"

"But just tell me what I have to do!"

"Wait a bit, now wait a bit. What I am saying is this: when you need your uncle he is a pet and a dear and a darling, and when you don't—you turn your back on him! It never enters your head to ask him: What do you think, Uncle darling—may I go to Moscow?"

"How strange you are, Uncle! It's imperative for me to go to Moscow, and suppose you say I mustn't?"

"If I say you mustn't, then stay, it won't harm you. It wouldn't be a stranger saying this to you but your own uncle—you might do as Uncle tells you. Ah, my dear, my dear! It's your good fortune that you have an uncle—someone to pity you and to pull you up. Think of those who have no one! No one to pity them, no one to admonish them—they grow up all by themselves! No wonder things happen to them... all sorts of things happen in life, my dear."

Anninka was on the point of retorting but she understood it would be merely adding fuel to the fire and said nothing. She sat and looked hopelessly at Porphyry Vladimich talking away.

"I have long been meaning to say to you," Judas went on, "I don't like it, I don't like it at all, the way you go about those fairs! You were annoyed at my talking about guitars, but still..."

"But it's not enough to say you don't like it! You must point a way out."

"Stay here with me—that's a way out for you."

"Oh no ... not that ... not for anything!"

"Why not?"

"Because there's nothing here for me to do. What is there to do here? Get up in the morning and have breakfast. At breakfast—think that lunch will be served presently. At lunch—that there will be dinner. At dinner—wonder how soon there will be tea again. And then supper and to bed ... I should die here!"

"Everyone lives in that way, my dear. First they have breakfast, then those who are used to it take lunch—

though I, for instance, am not used to it and don't take any; then they have dinner, then evening tea and at last go to bed. Surely there is nothing either ridiculous or reprehensible in it! Now, if I...."

"There's nothing reprehensible in it, it just doesn't suit me."

"Now, if I injured somebody, or spoke evil, or passed judgement upon people—that indeed would be reprehensible of me. But there's no harm in having tea, lunch, and dinner.... Why, bless you! You yourself, clever as you are, can't do without food!"

"Yes, it is all very well, but it's not my way of looking at it."

"You mustn't be thinking of yourself always—think of your elders too! 'My way', 'not my way'—you shouldn't talk like that! You should ask whether it's God's way—that would be right and sensible. If, now, at Golovlyovo we didn't live in God's way, if we went against God, if we sinned, repined, were envious or did any other wrong, then indeed we should be blameworthy and deserve censure. Only, you would first have to prove that we really were going against God. It's no use simply saying that you don't like it. Take me, for instance—there are lots of things I don't like. I don't like the way you talk to me and sniff at my hospitality—and yet I sit here and say nothing! I think to myself perhaps I'll bring it home to her in a quiet sort of way—perhaps she may come to her senses of herself. Perhaps while I am answering your sallies with jokes and smiles, your guardian angel may set you on the right path! It's on your account I am grieved, not on my own. Ah, my dear, it is very, very wrong of you! And it isn't as though I had said something bad to you, or taken advantage of you, or done you some wrong—that would have been different. Though it is God's command that we should accept in meekness our elders' admonitions, still, had I offended you, I would have merited your being cross with me. But here I am, as quiet as can be, not saying anything against you, and only thinking how to arrange things for the best, to everybody's joy and comfort—and you turn up your nose at all my kindness! You

shouldn't say everything that comes into your head, my dear, but first think and pray, and ask God to enlighten you! And then, if..."

Porphiry Vladimirich held forth in this way for a long time without a pause. Words oozed out one after another endlessly, in a sticky stream. Anninka looked at him with a vague fear, wondering that he did not choke. But he never told her what she was to do in consequence of Arina Petrovna's death. She brought up the same question at dinner and at tea, but every time Judas started on some tedious and irrelevant nonsense and Anninka was sorry she had started the conversation. Her only thought was: "When will it end?"

After dinner Porphiry Vladimirich went to have a nap, and Anninka was left alone with Yevpraxeya. She felt a sudden whim to start a conversation with her uncle's housekeeper. She wanted to know how it was Yevpraxeya was not afraid of living at Golovlyovo and what gave her the strength to withstand the torrents of empty words that burst from her uncle's mouth from morning till night.

"Do you find it dull at Golovlyovo?" she asked.

"Why should I? I am not a lady."

"But still ... you are always alone ... you have no amusements or distractions of any kind, nothing."

"I am not one for amusements. If I am dull, I look out of the window. When I lived at my father's I hadn't much fun either."

"Still, I should have thought you had a better time at home. You had friends, went to see each other, played games. ..."

"That we did."

"And with my uncle... He talks of such dull things and at such length! Is he always like that?"

"Always, he talks like that all day long."

"Doesn't it bore you?"

"Oh, I don't mind. I don't listen, you know."

"But you cannot always do that. He might notice it and take offence."

"And how can he tell? I look at him while he talks. I look, and meanwhile think my own thoughts."

"What do you think about?"

"All sorts of things. If it's time to pickle cucumbers I think about cucumbers; if we have to send to town for something, I think about that. Anything that's wanted in the house—I think of it all."

"So, although you are living together, you are really quite alone?"

"Yes, almost alone. Sometimes he fancies a game of 'fools' in the evening—well, then we play. And even then he will suddenly stop in the middle of the game, put down the cards and begin talking. And I sit and look at him. It was more fun when Arina Petrovna was living. He was afraid to talk too much before her: the old lady pulled him up now and again. But now there's no stopping him, he just lets himself go!"

"There, you see! But that's frightening, Yevpraxeya, you know! It's terrible when a man talks and you don't know why he talks and what he is saying and if he is ever going to stop. It is frightening, isn't it? It makes you uneasy, doesn't it?"

Yevpraxeya looked at her as though some remarkable thought had dawned on her for the first time.

"You are not the only one," she said, "many people here dislike him for it."

"Do they?"

"Yes. Take the footmen now—not one can stay with us for any length of time; we change them almost every month. And bailiffs too. And all because of that."

"He bores them?"

"He wears them out. Drunkards, now, don't mind living here, because drunkards don't hear. You might blow a trumpet for aught they care—it's as good as though they had a pot over their heads. But the trouble is, master doesn't like drunkards."

"Well, there you are! And he is trying to persuade me to settle at Golovlyovo."

"Well, Miss, it might be a good thing! Perhaps he'd be a little better with you here!"

"Oh no, thank you! I wouldn't have the patience, you know, to look into his eyes."

"Of course you wouldn't. You are a lady—you can

do as you please! Though I expect you, too, have to dance to someone else's tune sometimes."

"And very often too!"

"I thought so. And another thing I wanted to ask you: what's it like to be an actress?"

"I earn my living—that's something."

"And is it true what Porphiry Vladimirich told me—that strangers can put their arms round an actress when they like?"

Anninka flushed crimson.

"Porphiry Vladimirich doesn't understand," she answered irritably. "That's why he talks such nonsense. He can't even understand that it's play-acting and not real life."

"Well, I don't know.... Look how he too, Porphiry Vladimirich, I mean ... he fairly licked his chops when he saw you! 'Dear niece,' he says, like a good uncle, but his shameless eyes are all agog."

"Yevpraxeya! Why do you talk such nonsense?"

"I? What is it to me! Stay here and you'll see for yourself. But I don't care. If I am turned out I'll go back to my father. It really is dull here; you are right."

"You needn't think that I could possibly stay here. But about its being dull at Golovlyovo—that's a fact. And the longer you live here, the more bored you'll be."

Yevpraxeya pondered a little, then yawned and said:

"When I lived at my father's I was thin as a rake, and now see what a size I am! Boredom seems to do me good."

"But you won't be able to stand it long all the same. Mark my words, you won't."

There the conversation ended. Fortunately Porphiry Vladimirich had not heard it, or he would have found a fresh and fruitful subject that would have undoubtedly given a new turn to the endless flow of his tedious moralising.

Porphiry Vladimirich went on tormenting Anninka for two more days. He kept saying, "Wait and see! Slowly does it! Pray first and then act!" and so on. She was quite worn out. At last on the fifth day he made ready to go to town, though here too he found an op-

portunity for torturing his niece. After she had put on her fur coat and was in the hall ready to go, he dawdled for a whole hour as though on purpose. He washed, dressed, slapped his thighs, crossed himself, walked about, sat down, gave orders, such as "So that's how it is, my man!" or "Well, mind what you do . . . see that nothing goes wrong!" Altogether he behaved as though he were leaving Golovlyovo for ever and not for a few hours. Having tired out everyone—both the people and the horses that had been waiting for an hour and a half with the carriage—he found at last that his throat was dry with talking of nothing in particular, and decided to go.

They finished all they had to do in town while the horses had a feed of oats at the inn. Porphiry Vladimich presented a statement of accounts showing that the orphans' capital on the day of Arina Petrovna's death amounted to nearly twenty thousand rubles in five per cent bonds. The petition for handing over the estate and the capital to the owners, accompanied by documents proving that they were of age, was granted forthwith. The same evening Anninka signed all the papers and inventories drawn up by Porphiry Vladimich and breathed freely at last.

She was in a perfect fever during the days that followed. She wanted to leave Golovlyovo at once, but her uncle met all her attempts to do so with jokes which in spite of their kindly tone revealed such stupid obstinacy that no human power could override it.

"You have said yourself that you would stay a week—so a week you must stay!" he said. "Why shouldn't you? It's not as if you had to pay for lodgings—we are only too glad to have you! And if you want a cup of tea or a meal—you can have anything you fancy!"

"But I really must go, Uncle!" Anninka pleaded.

"You are anxious to go, but I won't give you the horses," Judas joked. "And if I don't give you the horses you are my prisoner! When the week is over, I won't say a word—go if you like. We'll hear Mass, take dinner and a drink of tea to set you on the way, have a talk and a good look at each other—and then God speed you! And

"I'll tell you what! Hadn't you better go to your Grand-mamma's grave once more—to say good-bye to her—and perhaps the dear departed will send you good advice from the other side?"

"I might," Anninka agreed.

"I'll tell you what we'll do: on Wednesday we'll go to Mass bright and early, then have dinner before you go, and then my horses will take you to Pogorelka, and from there you can go to Dvoriki on your own, Pogorelka horses. You are a landowner yourself! You have horses of your own, you know!"

She had to submit. Triteness is a tremendous power; those who are unused to it are always caught by it unawares; and while they look about them in amazement it quickly entangles them and grabs them in its clutches. It has probably happened to everyone that while walking past an open drain he had to stop his nose and even try and hold his breath; a similar effort is necessary when one enters the domain of triteness and empty talk. A man must dull his sight, hearing, taste and smell, and force himself to utter insensibility; only then will he escape being choked with the miasma of triteness. Anninka came to understand this, though rather late in the day; in any case she decided to leave her deliverance from Golovlyovo to the natural course of events. Judas so completely broke her spirit by his insuperable twaddle that she dared not draw away any more when he embraced her and like a good uncle stroked her back saying: "There, now you are a good girl!" She could not help shuddering when she felt his bony and slightly fluttering hand creeping up and down her back, but the thought: "O Lord, I hope he lets me go at the end of the week!" restrained her from otherwise expressing her disgust. Luckily for her Judas was by no means squeamish, and though he may have noticed her impatient movements, he made no comment. He evidently supported a theory of the relations between the sexes which is best expressed by the words: "You may love me, you may not, but keep your feelings to yourself."

The eagerly awaited day of her departure came at last. Anninka was up as early as six o'clock, but Judas

had forestalled her. He had already finished his morning devotions and, in anticipation of the first sound of the church bell, slouched about the rooms in his slippers and dressing-gown, peeping round the corners, listening behind doors, and so on. He was obviously agitated and gave a sidelong glance at Anninka when he met her. It was quite light out of doors but the weather was bad. The sky was completely covered with dark clouds; sleet was coming down; there were pools in the black-looking road—a sure sign of the snow being waterlogged; a strong south wind promised rain and thaw; the trees denuded of their snow wraps stood waving their wet bare tops helplessly in the wind; the outbuildings looked black and clammy. Porphiry Vladimich took Anninka to the window and pointed to this scene of spring rejuvenation.

"I wonder if you ought to go," he said. "Hadn't you better stay?"

"Oh no, no!" she cried in alarm. "It ... it will clear up!"

"I don't think so. If you leave at one you are not likely to be at Pogorelka before seven. And you can't travel in the dark when the roads are like this—you'll have to stay the night at Pogorelka anyway."

"Oh no, I'll go on at once, night or no night, I'll go straight away. ... I am brave, Uncle, you know! And why should I wait till one o'clock? Uncle darling, let me go at once!"

"And what will your granny say? She will say, 'Here's a nice grandchild! She came, hopped about, and didn't even ask for my blessing!'"

Porphiry Vladimich paused. He shifted his feet, glancing at Anninka and dropping his eyes again. He evidently wanted to say something but could not bring himself to do it.

"Wait a minute, I'll show you something!" he ventured at last and, pulling out of his pocket a folded sheet of note-paper, gave it to Anninka. "There, read this."

Anninka read:

"I was praying today and asking the dear Lord to leave me my Anninka. And the dear Lord said to me:

'Take Anninka by her plump little waist and press her to your heart.' "

"Well?" he asked, turning slightly pale.

"Ugh, Uncle, how horrid!" she answered, looking at him in embarrassment.

Porphiry Vladimirich turned paler still. "So it's husbands we want!" he said through his teeth, crossed himself and shuffled out of the room.

A quarter of an hour later, however, he returned perfectly at his ease and was joking with Anninka as before.

"Well then, will you call at the cemetery on your way?" he asked. "Want to say good-bye to your old granny? Do, my dear! It is very nice of you to have thought of Grandmamma. We must never forget our relatives and especially those who spared no effort caring for us."

They heard Mass and had a requiem sung, ate some frumenty in church and some more at home when they sat down to breakfast. As though to spite Anninka, Porphiry Vladimirich sipped his tea more slowly than usual and, talking between every two gulps, dragged out his words in a most provoking manner. By ten o'clock, however, breakfast was over and Anninka begged:

"Uncle, may I go now?"

"And dinner! A meal to set you on the way? Did you imagine your uncle would let you go away hungry? What next! Certainly not! It's unheard of in our family! Why, Mamma would have banished me out of her sight had she known that I let my own niece go on a journey without giving her a proper dinner! No, no, not another word! I won't hear of it!"

Anninka had to submit again. . . . An hour and a half passed but there was still no sign of any preparations for dinner. All the members of the household had wandered off; Yevpraxeya could be seen flitting across the yard between the cellar and the store-room, rattling her keys; Porphiry Vladimirich was talking to the bailiff, wearing him out with senseless orders, slapping himself on the thighs and altogether doing his best to while away the time. Anninka walked up and down the dining-room,

glancing at the clock, counting her steps and then the seconds: one, two, three. . . . At times she looked out of the window and saw that the pools were growing bigger and bigger.

At last there was a clatter of spoons, knives and plates; Stepan the footman came into the dining-room and spread the table-cloth. But it looked as though he too had been infected by Judas's deadness. He handled the plates with irritating slowness, blew into the glasses and held them up against the light. It was one o'clock when they sat down to dinner.

"Well, here you are going away!" said Porphiry Vladimirich, opening a conversation suitable to the occasion.

There was a plate of soup before him but he did not touch it; he was looking at Anninka so tenderly that the tip of his nose turned pink. Anninka hastily swallowed spoonful after spoonful. He also took up his spoon and even dipped it into his soup, but immediately put it down again.

"You must excuse an old man like me," he buzzed. "You have eaten your soup post-haste, and I make a long job of it. I don't like treating God's gift in an offhand manner. Bread has been given us for our nourishment, and we waste it—see what a lot of crumbs you've made! And altogether I like doing everything properly and without hurry—it's more sound. Maybe it annoys you that I don't jump through hoops—or whatever you call it?—at dinner; well, there is nothing for it! Be cross if you like! You'll be cross for a bit, and then you'll forgive me. You won't always be young either, you know, or always be jumping through hoops, you too will gain experience some day—and then you'll say, 'It looks as if my uncle was right, after all!' That's how it is, my dear. Now you may be thinking as you listen to me: 'Horrid Uncle! Uncle is an old grumpy!' But when you have lived to be my age you'll sing a different tune; you will say, 'Nice Uncle! He gave me good advice!'"

Porphiry Vladimirich crossed himself and swallowed two spoonfuls of soup. Having done this he left the spoon in the plate and leaned back in his chair as a sign that he had more to say.

"Blood-sucker!" was on Anninka's tongue. But she controlled herself and, quickly pouring out a glass of water, drank it at one gulp. Judas seemed to scent what was going on in her.

"Oh, you don't like it, do you? Well, even if you don't you should listen to your uncle! I have long been meaning to talk to you about this hastiness of yours, but I haven't had the leisure to do so. I don't like this hastiness: it shows flippancy, a lack of thought. That time for instance, the two of you shouldn't have left your Grand-mamma—you did not hesitate to grieve her and what was it all for?"

"Oh, why bring that up, Uncle! What is done is done. It really isn't nice of you."

"Nice or not nice, my point is that even when a thing is done it can be undone. Not only we sinners change our actions but God Himself does it: He sends us rain one day, and fine weather the next. Come, now! The stage can't be as precious as all that! Come! Give it up!"

"No, Uncle, don't talk of it, I beg you."

"And another thing I want to tell you: I don't like your flippancy, but I dislike even more the light way you treat your elders' remarks. Your uncle wishes you well, and you say, 'Don't talk of it!' Your uncle is kind and affectionate to you, and you turn up your nose at him! But do you know who has given you your uncle? Tell me, now, who has given him to you?"

Anninka looked at him in perplexity.

"God has given you your uncle—that's who! God! If it had not been for God, you would have been alone in the world and wouldn't have known what to do and what petition to send in and to whom, and what would come of it. You would have been as good as lost; one would have insulted you, another deceived you and a third simply laughed at you! But since you have an uncle, we have, with God's help, settled your whole business in a single day. We went to town, called at the trustees' office, filed a petition and received a reply. So that's what it means to have an uncle, my dear!"

"But I am grateful to you, Uncle!"

"And if you are grateful to your uncle, don't turn up your nose at him but do as he tells you. Your uncle wishes you well, though you fancy sometimes. . . ."

Anninka was hardly able to control herself. There was just one means left to put an end to her uncle's admonitions: to pretend that theoretically at least she accepted his invitation to stay at Golovlyovo.

"Very well, Uncle," she said, "I'll think about it. I understand of course that it isn't quite the thing to live alone, away from my relations. . . . But in any case I cannot decide anything at the moment. I must think it over."

"There now—you see it at last. But what is there to think about? Let's give word to unharness the horses and take your luggage out of the carriage—that's all the thinking there is!"

"No, Uncle, you forget that I have a sister!"

There was no telling whether Porphiry Vladimirich was convinced by this argument; he may have put on the whole performance merely for appearance's sake without being at all certain if he really wanted Anninka to stay at Golovlyovo, or if it was just a momentary whim on his part. In any case, after this the dinner went on at a livelier pace. Anninka agreed with everything he said and gave answers that afforded no opportunity for moralising. Nevertheless, it was half past two when the meal was over. Anninka jumped up from the table as though released from a steam-chamber and ran up to her uncle to say good-bye to him.

Ten minutes later Judas in his fur coat and bearskin boots was seeing her off at the front door and personally supervising her departure.

"Drive carefully down the hill, do you hear! And mind you don't upset the carriage on the Senkino slope!" he ordered the coachman.

At last Anninka was wrapped up and the carriage robe was fastened.

"Perhaps you'll stay after all?" Judas called after her, wishing to show to the assembled servants that everything was as it should be between good relatives. "Will you come and see me at any rate? What do you say?"

Knowing that she was already free, Anninka suddenly felt mischievous. She leaned out of the carriage and answered deliberately:

"No, Uncle, I will not come! It's terrifying to be with you!"

Judas pretended not to have heard but his lips turned white.

Anninka was too glad to have escaped from the Golovlyovo captivity to give a thought to the man whom she was leaving behind in that captivity for ever, and whose last link with the world of the living was severed by her departure. She was only thinking of herself: she had escaped and was happy. This sensation of freedom was so strong that when she visited her grandmother's grave again she showed no trace of the nervous sensibility she had displayed on her first visit there. She calmly heard the requiem, bowed before the grave without tears, and accepted readily enough the priest's invitation to take a cup of tea in his cottage.

The priest's home was very poor indeed. The only front-room in the house which also served as the reception-room was dismally bare; a dozen cheap wooden chairs upholstered in horsehair, torn in quite a number of places, were ranged round the walls; there was a sofa of the same kind with a curved back that looked like the puffed-out chest of an old-time general; a plain table covered with a dirty cloth stood between the windows; parish registers were heaped on this table, and behind them showed an ink-pot with a pen stuck in it; in the east corner there was an icon-stand with a sanctuary lamp burning before it; two trunks, which had contained the wife's trousseau, stood under it, covered with a faded grey cloth. There was no wallpaper; several faded daguerrotypes of bishops hung in the centre of one wall. The room had a peculiar smell, as though it had served for years as a cemetery for flies and cockroaches. The priest himself, though still a young man, seemed to have faded in these surroundings. His thin, pale hair hung down in straight wisps like the branches of a weeping willow; his eyes, that had once been blue, had a dejected look; his voice

trembled; his beard was scanty; his woollen cassock was too big for him but did not meet properly in front. The priest's wife, young, but worn out with yearly child-bearing, looked even more exhausted than her husband.

And yet Anninka could not help noticing that poor, downtrodden, and worn out as those people were, they regarded her with compassion as a lost lamb rather than as a proper parishioner.

"So you've been staying with your uncle?" the priest began, carefully taking a cup of tea that his wife had brought in.

"Yes, I spent a week there."

"Porphiry Vladimirich is the biggest landowner in all our neighbourhood now—the most important man here. But he doesn't seem to have much luck. He lost first one of his sons, then the other, and then his mother died too. It's strange he hasn't persuaded you to settle at Golovlyovo."

"He did suggest it, but I wouldn't stay."

"Why not?"

"It's better to be free, you know."

"Freedom of course is a good thing, Madam, though it has its dangers. And considering that you are Porphiry Vladimirich's nearest relative and therefore heiress to his estate, one would have thought you could concede a little of your freedom."

"No, Father, I prefer to earn my own bread. One breathes more freely, somehow, when one is independent."

The priest looked at her dully, as though wanting to ask: "Come, do you know what earning your own bread means?" but he was too shy. He merely pulled his cassock round him nervously.

"And what salary do you receive as an actress?" his wife asked.

The priest was quite embarrassed and gave a warning look to his wife. He thought Anninka would be offended. But she was not, and answered quite simply:

"I receive a hundred and fifty rubles a month, and my sister a hundred. And we have benefit performances too. We earn something like six thousand a year between us."

"And why is your sister paid less? Isn't she as good as you?" the priest's wife went on questioning.

"No, it isn't that—her style is different. I have a voice and can sing—the public prefers this, and my sister's voice is rather weak, so she acts in vaudevilles."

"So it's the same thing there: some are priests and others deacons, and still others mere choristers?"

"We share our money though; we decided from the first to go halves."

"Like good sisters? That's the best way. How much does it come to, husband? Six thousand rubles divided by months—what will that be?"

"Five hundred rubles a month, or two hundred and fifty each."

"Oh, what a lot of money! We wouldn't get through it in a year. And another thing I wanted to ask you: is it true that men treat actresses as though they weren't real women?"

The priest was so flustered that he let go the skirts of his cassock; but seeing that Anninka took the question quite calmly, he thought: "Well, she must be a tough one indeed"—and calmed down.

"How do you mean—not real women?" asked Anninka.

"Why, people say, men kiss them and put their arms round them . . . and, even if they don't want to, they must put up with it."

"They don't kiss but only pretend to. And there can be no question of wanting or not wanting, because it's all done according to stage directions: one just does what is written in the play."

"It may be in the play, and yet. . . . Some slobbering beast too loathsome to look at will thrust his mug at you, and you've got to offer him your lips."

Anninka could not help blushing: she suddenly pictured the bold Captain Papkov's slobbering face that certainly did "thrust" itself upon her and, alas! not even according to stage directions.

"You have quite a wrong idea of what happens on the stage," she said rather drily.

"Of course we've never been to a theatre, and yet I expect things aren't always nice there. My husband and I often talk of you; we are sorry for you, very sorry."

Anninka was silent; the priest sat tugging at his beard, as though making up his mind to put in his word too.

"Of course, Madam, every occupation has its pleasant and its unpleasant side," he brought out at last, "but, in his weakness, man takes delight in the first and tries to forget the second. And why to forget? Just so as to avoid having before him this last reminder of duty and virtuous life."

And he added, with a sigh:

"And above all, Madam, one must preserve one's treasure!" The priest looked at Anninka admonishingly; his wife shook her head dejectedly, as though saying, "Not likely!"

"And it seems rather doubtful if one can preserve that treasure, being an actress," the priest went on.

Anninka did not know what to say to this. She was beginning to fancy that what these simple-hearted people said about "the treasure" was exactly on a par with the officers' remarks about *la chose*. It was evident to her that here too, as at her uncle's, she was regarded as something out of the ordinary, to be pitied, perhaps, but to be kept at a distance for fear of soiling oneself.

"Why is your church so poor, Father?" she asked, to change the subject.

"There is no chance for it to be rich—that's why. All the landowners are away on government service, and the peasants haven't the means. And there are only some two hundred of them in the parish all told."

"Our bell is too bad, really!" the priest's wife sighed.

"The bell, and everything else too. Our bell weighs only about five hundredweight, and it's split into the bargain. It makes a queer kind of noise instead of ringing—quite unseemly, indeed. Arina Petrovna, God rest her soul, promised to give us a new one and, had she lived, I am sure we should have had it."

"You should have told my uncle that Grandmamma promised it."

"I did tell him, Madam, and, to do him justice, he heard me out quite graciously. But he could give me no satisfactory answer; he had not heard anything from his mother about it, he said. It appears that she had never

mentioned it to him. If she had, he would certainly have carried out her wish, he said."

"Not heard, indeed!" the priest's wife said. "All the neighbourhood knows it and he hadn't heard!"

"So that's how things are with us. We used to live in hope, at least, but now we have no hope left. Sometimes I have nothing to observe Mass with: no wheaten bread, no wine. And our own circumstances I won't even mention."

Anninka was on the point of getting up and saying good-bye when a new tray appeared on the table with a bottle of Madeira and two plates: one with mushrooms and another with a little caviare.

"Please have some, do us the honour!"

Anninka obeyed and hastily swallowed two mushrooms, refusing the Madeira.

"There's another thing I wanted to ask you," the priest's wife was saying. "There's a girl in our parish who has been in service with an actress in Petersburg. She says it's a fine life being an actress, only they have to have their tickets* renewed each month ... is that true?"

Anninka looked at her open-eyed, uncomprehending.

"That's to have more freedom," the priest explained, "however, I think what she says isn't true. On the contrary, I have heard that many actresses are granted government pensions for their services."

Anninka saw that the farther into the wood, the thicker the trees, and got up to say good-bye.

"And we had thought you'd give up being an actress now!" the priest's wife went on badgering her.

"Why should I?"

"Oh, well, you are a lady, you know. Now you have come of age, you have an estate of your own—what could be better!"

"And then you're your uncle's heiress, too," the priest added.

"No, I am not going to live here."

* The so-called "yellow ticket" is implied—a document handed in tsarist Russia to officially registered prostitutes.—*Ed.*

"And we did so hope you would! We kept saying to each other: our young ladies are sure to settle at Pogorelka now. It is very nice here in the summer: one can go mushrooming in the woods," the priest's wife said to tempt Anninka.

"We have plenty of mushrooms even in a dry summer," the priest seconded her.

At last Anninka left them. The first thing she did when she came to Pogorelka was to ask for horses. "Please make haste!" But Fedulych merely shrugged his shoulders.

"Horses, indeed! We haven't fed them yet," he grumbled.

"But why ever not? Oh dear! It's as though you were all determined to stop me going!"

"Of course we are! Naturally. Anyone can see that you can't travel at night in the thaw. You'd get stuck in the waterlogged snow—so we thought you'd be better indoors."

Arina Petrovna's rooms had been heated. The bed was made and the samovar was puffing on the writing-table; Afimyushka was scraping together the remnants of tea left at the bottom of an old-fashioned tea-caddy after Arina Petrovna's death. While she was making tea Fedulych with his arms crossed stood in the doorway facing the young mistress; Markovna and the dairymaid stood on either side of him in attitudes that suggested they were ready at the least sign from her to run to the ends of the earth.

"It's your Grandmamma's tea," Fedulych began the conversation, "there was some left at the bottom when she died. Porphiry Vladimirovich wanted to take the caddy but I wouldn't let him. Maybe the young ladies will come, I said, and want some tea before they have had time to buy some of their own. Well, he let it go, in fact he joked about it. 'You'll drink it yourself, you old rascal,' he said. 'See that you bring the tea-caddy to Golovlyovo when it's empty!' I suppose he'll send for it tomorrow."

"You should have given it to him there and then."

"Why should I? He's plenty of tea as it is. Now at any rate we can have a cup after you've finished. By the way,

Miss, are you going to hand us over to Porphiry Vladimirich?"

"Certainly not."

"Good. We were going to rebel against it. We thought we'd all give notice if you passed us on to him."

"Why is that? Is my uncle such a terror?"

"No, it's not that, but he does wear one out with his talk. His words are enough to rot a man."

Anninka could not help smiling. There really was something putrid about Judas's long-winded sententiousness. It was not ordinary twaddle, but an ever-festering, stinking sore.

"Well, and what have you decided to do about yourself, Miss?" Fedulych went on.

"How do you mean, what is it I have to decide?" Anninka asked somewhat uneasily, foreseeing that she was going to be once more subjected to sermonising about "the treasure".

"But surely you won't remain an actress now?"

"Yes, I will . . . that is, I haven't thought about it yet. But what harm is there in my earning my living as best I can?"

"There's nothing good in going about the fairs with a tambourine, amusing the drunkards! You are a lady, you know."

Anninka said nothing and merely frowned. Her mind throbbed painfully with the question, "Good heavens, when shall I get away from here?"

"Of course you know best what to do with yourself, but we had thought you'd return to us. The house is warm and roomy—you could play catch in it if you liked! Your Grandmamma had arranged it all very nicely. If you are bored, you can go for a sledge drive, and in the summer there's mushrooming!"

"We have all sorts of mushrooms here, and no end of them!" Afimyushka lisped alluringly.

Anninka leaned both arms on the table, trying not to listen.

"A wench from these parts," Fedulych pressed on mercilessly, "had been a servant in Petersburg—and she told

us that all actresses have to have a ticket. They have to show it at the police station every month!"

Anninka went hot all over: she had been hearing these same words all day.

"Fedulych!" she cried out. "What have I ever done to you? Do you really enjoy insulting me?"

She had had enough. There was a lump in her throat—one word more, and she would break down.

ILLICIT FAMILY JOYS

Not long before the catastrophe with Petenka, Arina Petrovna noticed on one of her visits to Golovlyovo that Yevpraxeya looked a little plumper. Arina Petrovna had a keen and sure eye for that sort of thing, for she had had a lot of experience in such matters in the days of serfdom when the pregnancy of domestic servants used to afford opportunity for a thorough and rather diverting investigation and was regarded almost as a source of income. She had no sooner fixed her gaze on Yevpraxeya's waist than the latter flushed crimson and turned away without a word, fully conscious of her guilt.

"Come, come, my beauty, look at me! With child, are you?" the experienced old lady asked the erring damsel; but there was no reproach in her voice, on the contrary she spoke jestingly, almost gaily, as though she suddenly felt a breath of the good old times.

Yevpraxeya made no response, looking both shy and complacent, and only her cheeks glowed redder and redder under Arina Petrovna's inquiring glance.

"I noticed yesterday you kept huddling yourself together—so that's it! You thought you'd go about wagging your tail like a good one, did you? No, my dear, you won't take me in! I see all your tricks a mile off! Now what wind brought you this? When? Make a clean breast of it! Tell me!"

A thorough interrogation followed: When did she notice the first symptoms? had she a midwife in view? did Porphyry Vladimirich know of the joy in store for him? was Yevpraxeya taking care of herself? had she been lifting anything heavy? etc. It appeared that Yevpraxeya was in the fifth month of pregnancy; that she

had no midwife in view so far; that she had told Porphyry Vladimirich but he said nothing and merely whispered to himself, folding his hands and looking at the icon as a sign that all was from God and He, the King of Heaven, would provide for everything; that one day Yevpraxeya had foolishly lifted a samovar and immediately felt as though something had snapped inside her.

"Well, you are a reckless lot, I must say!" Arina Petrovna said with concern when she had heard it all. "I see I shall have to take the thing in hand myself. Just fancy, the fifth month and they haven't thought of a midwife! You should at least have had Ulita take a look at you, you silly!"

"I had thought of it, but master doesn't like Ulita."

"Nonsense, my dear, nonsense! Whether Ulita has displeased him in some way or other is another matter—but in a case like this he shouldn't be making any difficulties. It won't hurt us to ask her, will it? No, there's nothing for it, I shall have to see to it myself!"

Arina Petrovna wanted to make use of this chance for indulging in a little self-pity to the effect that even in her old age she had to carry other people's burdens, but the subject of the conversation was so fascinating that she smacked her lips and went on:

"Well, my beauty, now you are in for it! You called the tune, now you must pay the piper! You pay the piper, my dear! I brought up three sons and a daughter, and buried five as babies, so I know! Those wretched men do give us a time of it!" she added emphatically.

Suddenly a new idea dawned on her.

"Good heavens! I believe it was on the eve of a fast, too! Wait a minute, I'll reckon it out!"

They began counting on their fingers, they counted once, twice, three times—it looked as if it really had been on the eve of a fast.

"Well, well, well! That's our holy hermit! I'll tease him about it presently! Our man of prayer has got himself into a nice mess! I'll tease him right enough! You may be sure of that!" the old woman joked.

And indeed that very day at tea Arina Petrovna made fun of Judas in Yevpraxeya's presence.

"Well, my humble Christian, you have played a fine trick! Or perhaps your madam really did catch it in the wind? I must say you have surprised me, my boy!"

At first Judas grimaced squeamishly at his mother's jokes, but seeing that Arina Petrovna spoke "like a good mother" and "in all kindness", he gradually cheered up.

"You are a naughty one, Mamma! You really are!" he joked in his turn. But, as was his wont, he would not commit himself on the vital subject.

"Naughty, indeed! We must talk of it seriously. This is no light matter. It's one of God's mysteries—that's what it is! Though it isn't all proper, yet. . . . Yes, we must certainly think it over and very carefully too! Do you want her to be confined at home, or will you take her to town?"

"I don't know, Mamma, I know nothing about it, dear!" Porphyry Vladimirich said evasively. "You really are naughty, you know!"

"Very well then, my girl! You and I will have a good talk about it presently and settle all we have to do. Those wretched men think of nothing but their pleasure and we women have to foot the bill as best we can!"

Having made her discovery, Arina Petrovna felt like a duck in water. She talked to Yevpraxeya the whole evening through and couldn't have enough of the subject. Her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes sparkled like a girl's.

"Have you thought what this means, my dear? It's . . . sacred, you know!" she insisted. "For though it isn't all as it should be, it's the real thing all the same. . . . But mind! If, heaven forbid, it really was on a fast day, you'll never hear the last of it, I'll simply give you no peace!"

Ulita was taken into their secret. At first they discussed the practical side of the matter—whether Yevpraxeya should have an enema or have her stomach rubbed with ointment. Then they turned to their favourite subject once more and began reckoning on their fingers—and each time they made out that the child must have been conceived on a fast day. Yevpraxeya flushed red as a poppy but did not deny the charge and merely pleaded that she had no say in the matter.

"What can I do?" she said. "It's as the master pleases. If it's his orders, how can I go against him?"

"There, there, you little innocent, it's no use wagging your tail!" Arina Petrovna joked. "I expect you were only too glad. . . ."

In short, the women thoroughly enjoyed the whole business. Arina Petrovna recalled a number of incidents from her own past and of course proceeded to relate them. At first she told about her own confinements—of the awful time she had with Styopka the blockhead; of driving to Moscow by post-chaise so as not to miss Dubrovino which was being auctioned when she was expecting Pavel and nearly giving up the ghost in consequence, and so on, and so on. All her pregnancies were in some way remarkable; the only child that gave her no trouble was Judas.

"I felt not the slightest bit of discomfort at all," she said; "I used to sit and wonder to myself if I really was with child. And when my time came I lay down on the bed for a minute and suddenly I was delivered, I don't know myself how! It was the easiest confinement I have ever had! By far the easiest!"

Then followed stories about the servant girls. Some of them she had "caught" herself, others she had tracked down with the help of confidential servants, Ulita chiefly. The old woman's memory preserved all the details with astonishing clarity. Spying out the maids' love affairs was the only thing that stirred a living chord of romance in the whole of her colourless past, completely absorbed as it was in hoarding possessions, big and little.

It was something like a love story in a dull magazine in which the reader expects to find articles about fogs and the place of Ovid's tomb—and, instead, comes across "A jaunty troika flies along. . . ." The endings to the maids' artless romances were generally very grim, not to say inhuman: the guilty girl was married off into some distant village, always to a widower with a large family; the guilty man was made a soldier or reduced to the position of a cattle-yard labourer. But the memory of these endings had somehow faded (altogether the gentry's memory is very lenient with regard to their conduct in the past), while the actual process of tracking down the lover still had all the vividness of reality. And no won-

der! In its time this tracking was conducted with the same absorbing interest as the reading of some serial novel of the present day, in which the author, instead of crowning the hero and heroine's mutual attraction at once, puts a full stop after the most heart-rending passage and writes: "To be continued."

"I had no end of trouble with them!" Arina Petrovna related. "Some of them tried to carry it off, up and doing till the last minute—hoping to deceive me! But there was no taking me in, my dear, I have been through it all myself!" she added almost sternly, as though threatening someone.

Then followed stories of pregnancies of a "high policy" nature, so to speak, in which Arina Petrovna figured no longer as an avenger but as a protector and conniver.

Thus, for instance, her Papa, Pyotr Ivanich, a decrepit old man of seventy, had a mistress who suddenly turned out to be with child, and, for various important reasons, the fact had to be concealed from him. As ill luck would have it, Arina Petrovna was at that time on bad terms with her brother Pyotr Petrovich, who, for some ulterior motives, was also interested in the matter and wanted to open the old man's eyes to his lady-love's character.

"And would you believe it, we managed the whole business almost before Papa's eyes! He was asleep in his room, the dear old man, and we were at it next door! Speaking in whispers, walking on tiptoe! I stopped her mouth with my own hands to stifle her cries, and I cleared away the soiled linen, and when the boy was born—such a pretty, healthy baby he was!—I took a cab and carried him off to the Foundling Home*! When my brother heard of it a week later he simply gasped. 'Well, my sister is a caution and no mistake', he said."

There was another "high policy" pregnancy: it happened to Arina Petrovna's sister-in-law, Varvara Mikhailovna. Her husband was away fighting the Turks, and

* These homes, maintained by the state, took in illegitimate children and orphans, "farming them out" with poor peasants who needed the money. Over 70 per cent of the children died before they were grown.—*Ed.*

she went and got herself into trouble. She rushed like mad to Golovlyovo: "Save me, sister!"

"We were at odds with one another at that time, but I didn't make an issue of it then; I received her properly, reassured and comforted her, and, under the pretext of a visit, we managed the whole thing so neatly that her husband never smelt the rat as long as he lived!"

Thus ran Arina Petrovna's tales and, it must be admitted, few story-tellers find such attentive listeners as hers were. Yevpraxeya hung on every word, as though some wonderful fairy-tale were being enacted before her eyes; as to Ulita, who had taken part in most of the events narrated, she merely smacked her lips in acquiescence.

Ulita too had blossomed out and was enjoying herself. Her life had been an anxious one. From her early days she had been consumed with servile ambition and dreamed of nothing but pleasing her masters and bullying her fellow-servants, and yet she had had no luck. No sooner had she placed her foot on the higher rung of the ladder than some unseen power would hurl her down into the bottomless pit once more. She was endowed to perfection with all the qualities of a useful servant: she was spiteful, had a caustic tongue and was always ready for any perfidy, but at the same time she was so inordinately wanting in firmness that all her malice came to nothing. In the old days Arina Petrovna readily made use of her when it was a case of a secret inquiry in the maids' room or some other shady business, but she never valued her services too highly or admitted her to any position of importance. In consequence, Ulita went in for complaints and slander, but no one took any notice of it, for everyone knew that she was a spiteful wench, cursing you to hell one moment and cringing and fawning on you the next at the least encouragement. And so she struggled on, trying to make her way in life and achieving nothing, till at last the abolition of serfdom put an end to her servile ambitions.

Something did happen in her youth, though, that had distinctly raised her hopes. During one of his visits to Golovlyovo Porphyry Vladimirich had an affair with her and, as rumour had it, she even bore him a child—which brought on Arina Petrovna's displeasure. History does

not say whether their relations continued during his subsequent visits to his parental home, but in any case Ulita's hopes were dashed to the ground in a most disappointing way when Porphiry Vladimich settled at Golovlyovo for good. As soon as he arrived she rushed to him bearing tales in which Arina Petrovna was accused almost of cheating; but though "the master" listened to the gossip graciously enough, he looked at Ulita coldly and failed to remember her "services" in the past. Hurt and deceived in her hopes, Ulita migrated to Dubrovino where Pavel Vladimich, out of hatred for his brother, welcomed her and made her his housekeeper. Her fortunes seemed to have mended for a time. Pavel Vladimich sat in his rooms upstairs drinking glass after glass, while she scurried round the cellars and the store-rooms from morning till night rattling her keys, lashing out at everybody with her tongue, and intriguing against Arina Petrovna whose life she did her best to poison.

But Ulita was too fond of perfidy to enjoy her good luck in peace. Pavel Vladimich was drinking so hard that one could feel definitely hopeful about the results. Porphiry Vladimich understood that in the circumstances Ulita would be invaluable—and again "beckoned" to her. She received orders from Golovlyovo not to leave the victim for a moment, not to contradict him in anything, not even in his hatred for his brother, and at all costs to prevent Arina Petrovna's interference. It was one of those family crimes that Judas did not plot and plan deliberately but committed, as it were, casually, as a matter of course. Needless to say, Ulita carried out his orders to the letter. Pavel Vladimich never ceased hating his brother, but the more he hated him the more he drank and the less able he was to listen to anything Arina Petrovna said about "making arrangements". Every gesture, every word of the dying man was immediately reported at Golovlyovo, so that Judas could with full knowledge of the state of affairs determine the moment when he ought to appear on the scene as a master of the situation he had created. And he made full use of this knowledge, arriving at Dubrovino just when it fell into his hands of itself, so to speak.

Judas rewarded Ulita for this service by giving her a woollen dress length, but he did not admit her to any intimacy. Once more Ulita was hurled headlong from giddy heights to the bottomless pit, and this time it looked as though nobody in the world would ever beckon to her again.

As a special favour for her "having looked after his dear brother in his last hours" Judas assigned to her a corner in the cottage where some of the deserving old serfs were allowed to live after serfdom had been abolished. There Ulita gave up all her ambitions at last, and when Porphiry Vladimirich picked out Yevpraxeya, far from being disagreeable about it, she was the first to come and pay her respects to the "master's madam" and to kiss her on the shoulder.

And suddenly, at the very moment when it was brought home to her that she was completely forgotten and forsaken, her luck turned again: Yevpraxeya was with child. They remembered that somewhere in the servants' cottage lived a woman "worth her weight in gold", and "beckoned" to her. True, it was not the master himself who "beckoned" but it sufficed her that he had raised no objections to it. Ulita marked her reinstatement into the house by taking the samovar out of Yevpraxeya's hands and, bending slightly sideways, jauntily carrying it into the dining-room where Porphiry Vladimirich was sitting. And "the master" did not say a word. She fancied that he actually smiled when on another occasion, also with a samovar in her hands, she met him in the passage and called to him from a distance, "Stand out of the way, sir—you'll get scalded!"

Invited to the family council, Ulita jibbed for a while and would not sit down. But when Arina Petrovna snapped at her, in a friendly voice, it is true: "Sit down! None of your hocus-pocus now—the tsar has made us all equal! Sit down!" she did sit down, very subdued at first, but by and by she came to be quite at her ease.

That woman too had her reminiscences. Many unsavoury memories of the days of serfdom were stored away in her mind. Besides carrying out delicate commissions and nosing out the maids' amours, Ulita used to act as

leech and apothecary in the Golovlyovo household. The number of mustard plasters, poultices and especially enemas she had administered in her life! She had given enemas to the old master Vladimir Mikhailich, to Arina Petrovna and to every single one of the young masters—and had preserved most grateful memories about it. And now there was an almost unlimited scope for these memories. . . .

The Golovlyovo house seemed to have mysteriously come to life. Arina Petrovna was always coming up from Pogorelka to see her "good son", and preparations to which as yet no name was given were in full swing under her supervision. After evening tea the three women retired to Yevpraxeya's room, treated themselves to homemade jam, played "fools" and till late at night indulged in reminiscences which sometimes made the young woman flush crimson. The least incident provided an occasion for fresh stories. When Yevpraxeya served some raspberry jam, Arina Petrovna recalled how, when she was carrying her daughter Sonya, she could not endure the very smell of raspberries.

"The moment they brought it into the house I could smell it was there! I'd scream as loud as can be, 'Take the damned stuff away, take it away!' And after my confinement I didn't mind, and came to like it again!"

Yevpraxeya served some caviare—Arina Petrovna recalled an incident apropos of that.

"Caviare, now—a most peculiar thing happened to me! I hadn't been married more than a month or two—and suddenly I felt I simply must have some caviare! I kept going to the store-room on the quiet and eating and eating it! So I said to my man one day, 'What does it mean, Vladimir Mikhailich, that I just keep on eating caviare?' And he smiled a little and said, 'Why, my dear, you are with child.' And indeed, nine months after that I had Styopka the blockhead!"

Porphyry Vladimirich meanwhile preserved his enigmatic attitude to Yevpraxeya's pregnancy and never definitely admitted that it had anything to do with him. This naturally made the women feel uncomfortable and disturbed their flow of confidences, and so they neglected

Judas altogether and drove him away without any ceremony if in the evening he dropped in to join the company in Yevpraxeya's room.

"Go on, go on, my young man!" Arina Petrovna said gaily. "You have done your part; now it is up to us women to do the rest! It's our day now!"

Judas humbly withdrew, and though he did not miss the opportunity of reproaching his darling Mamma for being unkind to him, at the bottom of his heart he was very glad that they left him in peace and that Arina Petrovna was taking such a lively interest in situation which was distinctly embarrassing for him. If it had not been for her, heaven only knows what he would have had to do to hush by this nasty business, the very thought of which made him squirm and curse. And now he hoped that, with Arina Petrovna's experience and Ulita's smartness, the "trouble" would be managed without any scandal and that perhaps he himself would only hear of the event when all was over.

Porphiry Vladimirich's hopes were not to come true however. First there was the catastrophe with Petenka and soon after came Arina Petrovna's death. He had to settle matters personally, and without the least prospect of arranging some shady transaction. He could not send Yevpraxeya home for "immorality" because, owing to Arina Petrovna's intervention, things had gone too far and become common property. He could not rely on Ulita either, clever as she was, for if one put oneself into her hands there would probably be no getting away from the law afterwards. For the first time in his life Judas sincerely and bitterly resented his loneliness, for the first time he vaguely understood that the people around him were not mere pawns existing for the sole object of being imposed upon.

"And why couldn't she have waited a bit!" he complained to himself about his darling Mamma. "Why couldn't she have arranged it all cleverly and quietly, and then gone, bless her! If the time has come to die, there is nothing for it! I am sorry for the old soul, but if such be God's will, our tears, and doctors, and medicines and



we ourselves can do nothing against it! The old lady has had her day and made good use of it! She lived as befits her station in life and provided for her children. She has had her day, and that's enough!"

His fussy mind which never liked to dwell on matters that presented any practical difficulty, immediately passed on to a more easy subject apropos of which he could carry on endlessly and without hindrance.

"And the way she passed on! Truly, it's only the righteous are vouchsafed such an end!" he lied to himself, not knowing, in point of fact, whether he was lying or speaking the truth. "No pain, no distress . . . nothing! Ah, Mamma, Mamma! a sweet little smile on her face, and her cheeks so rosy . . . her hands folded as though in blessing, and her eyes closed . . . adieu!"

And suddenly when he was quite carried away by these pathetic words something would seem to prick him. That vile business again . . . curse it! Why couldn't Mamma have waited the tiniest bit! There was only a month or perhaps less to go—and there, she went and died!

For a time he tried to put off Ulita's questions in the same way as he had done with Mamma: "I don't know! I know nothing about it!" But such methods failed with Ulita who was an impudent woman, and, moreover, conscious now that she had the whip hand of him.

"Should I be the one to know? Was it I got her into trouble?" she cut him short from the first so that he understood that his hopes of happily combining the part of a seducer with that of an outside observer of the results of his sin had been blighted completely.

The disaster was drawing nearer and nearer, an inevitable, almost tangible disaster! It pursued him every moment, and, what was worst of all, it paralysed his faculty for thinking empty thoughts. He made desperate efforts to banish the idea of it, to drown it in a torrent of empty words, but he only partly succeeded in this. He tried to take refuge in the immutable laws of Providence, playing with the subject as with a ball of thread that could be unwound indefinitely. He brought in the parable about the hairs of one's head being numbered and the

legend about the house that is built on the sand; but just as his idle thoughts began rolling smoothly one after the other down into some mysterious abyss and he felt completely confident that he could go on unwinding the ball for ever—one single word suddenly intruded itself upon him, snapping the thread in two. Alas! that word was "fornication" and designated an action which Judas did not want to confess even to himself.

And so, when after vain attempts to forget and to banish the thought, he grasped that he was trapped, he felt wretched. He paced up and down the room, thinking of nothing and merely conscious of a sinking, gnawing sensation inside him.

This was the first time in his life that something had happened to check the idle flow of his thoughts. Hitherto, in whatever direction his empty fancy moved, it found nothing but limitless space in which there was ample room for all sorts of idle associations. Even Volodenka's and Petenka's tragic fate and Arina Petrovna's death did not hinder him in this. Those were ordinary facts recognised by everyone and could be met in the traditional, generally recognised manner. Requiems, masses, funeral dinners, etc.—he observed them all in accordance with custom and thus justified himself, so to speak, both before men and before Providence. But fornication . . . what was that? That meant showing him up, exposing the falsity of his whole life! True, people had always said he was a backbiter and even a blood-sucker, but these rumours had so little foundation in well-authenticated fact that he had every right to challenge them and demand proofs. And now . . . he had been caught in fornication! Unquestionable, undeniable fornication (he had not even taken any *measures*, thanks to Arina Petrovna—"Ah, Mamma, Mamma!"—had not even had time to think of a convenient lie), and "on the eve of a fast" too . . . ugh!

These inner deliberations, involved as their course was, showed something like an awakening of conscience. But the question was, would Judas follow it up, or would on this occasion, too, his pettifogging mind provide him with some way of escape so that he could as usual emerge from the fire unscathed?

While Judas was pining under the burden of his own shallowness, an unexpected inner change was gradually taking place in Yevpraxeya. Her approaching motherhood seemed to have loosened the bonds that held her mind captive. So far she had been indifferent to everything and regarded Porphyry Vladimirich as her "master" whom she was bound to please. Now for the first time she seemed to understand that she had her own part to play in life, the part of the most important character, and that she could not be bullied with impunity. As a result, the very expression of her face, generally dull and ungainly, grew brighter and more intelligent.

Arina Petrovna's death was the first fact in her half-unconscious life to shake her awake. For all the peculiarity of the old lady's attitude to Yevpraxeya's expectant motherhood, there was in it a glimmer of genuine sympathy as compared with Judas's nastily squeamish evasiveness. And so Yevpraxeya began to regard Arina Petrovna as something like her champion, as though suspecting some forthcoming attack against herself. Her forebodings were the more persistent as she did not consciously formulate them but merely suffered from a continual vague anxiety. Her intelligence was not sufficient to tell her whence the attack would come and what form it would take; but her instincts were roused and she felt an unaccountable fear at the very sight of Judas. Yes, it would come from there! re-echoed through the inmost recesses of her heart: from there, from this dust-filled coffin which she had been tending as a mere hireling and which, by some miracle, had suddenly become the father and owner of *her* child! The feeling that this thought aroused in her was akin to hatred and would certainly have developed into hatred, had she not found relief in Arina Petrovna's sympathy. Her kindly chatter gave Yevpraxeya no time to think.

But Arina Petrovna first retired to Pogorelka and then faded away altogether. An uneasy feeling crept over Yevpraxeya. The stillness into which the Golovlyovo house was plunged was only disturbed by the sound of rustling which meant that Judas was walking stealthily down the passage, holding up the skirts of his dressing-gown and

listening at doors. Sometimes one of the servants ran in from the yard, banging the back door and again stillness seemed to crawl from every corner—a dead stillness that filled one's heart with a superstitious, smarting despondency. And as Yevpraxeya was in the last days of pregnancy, she had not even the distraction of housework which in the old days tired her out so thoroughly that towards evening she was only half-awake. She tried seeking affection in Porphiry Vladimirich, but this merely led to brief but malicious scenes that distressed her, insensitive as she was. And so she had to sit with her hands in her lap and think, that is, be a prey to anxiety. There was more and more cause for anxiety with every day because Arina Petrovna's death untied Ulita's hands and introduced into the Golovlyovo house a new element of gossip which now formed the only subject of vital interest in which Judas's mind could relax.

Ulita understood that Porphiry Vladimirich was afraid, and that in a shallow and mendacious nature like his cowardice came very close to hate. Besides, she knew very well that Porphiry Vladimirich was incapable not only of affection but of simple pity, and that he kept Yevpraxeya merely because she was responsible for the smooth running of the household routine. Armed with these simple data Ulita was able to keep continually alive the feeling of hatred that surged in Judas's breast whenever anything reminded him of the coming disaster.

In a short time Yevpraxeya was caught in a regular network of vicious gossip. Ulita was constantly "making reports" to the master. One day she would come and complain of the careless way household provisions were being wasted.

"I say, sir, you do get through a lot of food here! I went to the cellar this morning to fetch some salt meat; I thought it wasn't long since a new barrel had been started—and when I looked there wasn't more than two or three pieces left at the bottom!"

"Indeed?" Judas stared at her.

"If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes I wouldn't have believed it! It's extraordinary where all the stuff goes to.

Butter, cereals, cucumbers—everything! On other estates servants have goose-dripping with their porridge—it's good enough for them!—but here they always have butter, and fresh butter at that!”

“Indeed?” Porphiry Vladimirich was quite alarmed.

Another day she would come in and casually drop a word about the household linen.

“You really ought to pull up Yevpraxeya, master dear. Of course, she is young and not used to things, but take the linen, for instance. . . . She has used no end of it to make her baby's sheets and diapers, and such fine linen, too!”

Porphiry Vladimirich would only glare in reply, but all his shallow being writhed at these words.

“Naturally, she feels for her baby,” Uлита went on in a honeyed voice. “She acts as though heaven knows what is going to happen! She might be expecting a prince! But one would have thought her baby could just as well sleep in hempen sheets . . . considering her station in life!”

Sometimes she simply teased Judas.

“I meant to ask you, master dear,” she began, “what are your intentions about the baby? Will you recognise him as your son, or send him to the Foundling Home like the others?”

But Porphiry Vladimirich cut her short with such a black look that she went no further.

And now amidst hatred seething on all sides the moment was drawing closer and closer when the birth of a tiny, weeping “servant of God” would settle one way or another the moral confusion that prevailed in the Golovlyovo household, and at the same time increase the number of other weeping “servants of God” that populate the world.

It was past six in the evening. Porphiry Vladimirich had had his afternoon nap and was sitting at his desk covering sheets of paper with figures. The problem that now occupied his mind was: how much money would he have had now if Arina Petrovna had not appropriated the hundred paper rubles which Grandpapa Pyotr Iva-

nich had given him at his christening, but invested them instead in the name of baby Porphiry. It appeared it would not have been very much: only eight hundred paper rubles.

"It isn't much, of course," Judas reflected in his idle way, "and yet it is nice to know one has something put by for a rainy day. If you need it, you draw it out. You don't have to ask anyone for it, put yourself under any obligation to anyone—you take what is your own, given you by your grandfather! Ah, Mamma, Mamma! I wonder you could have been so rash!"

Alas, Porphiry Vladimirich had recovered from the anxieties which had so recently paralysed his idle thinking. The peculiar glimpses of something like conscience, awakened by the difficulty in which Yevpraxeya's pregnancy and Arina Petrovna's sudden death had placed him, gradually faded away. His habit of thinking empty thoughts stood him in good stead here, as always, and after tremendous efforts he did finally succeed in drowning the idea of his "trouble" in a sea of empty words. It could not be said that he had consciously come to any decision; somehow his favourite old formula to which he had always had recourse in trying circumstances suddenly came into his head of itself: "I know nothing! I permit nothing and I forbid everything!" It soon put an end to the inner confusion that had upset him for a time. He now regarded Yevpraxeya's approaching confinement as an event that had nothing to do with him and consequently his face assumed a dispassionate and impenetrable expression. He almost completely ignored Yevpraxeya and did not even mention her name; when he happened to inquire after her he said, "And is *that one* still ill?" In short, he proved so hard a nut to crack that even Ulita, well schooled in the days of serfdom in the science of reading hearts, understood that there was no fighting a man who was ready to fall in with any situation.

The Golovlyovo house was plunged into darkness; there was a light only in the master's study and in Yevpraxeya's little room at the far end of the passage. Stillness reigned in Judas's part of the house, interrupted

only by the rattle of the abacus and the whisper of the pencil with which he was doing his calculations. And suddenly a distant but heart-rending moan broke into the silence of the study. Judas started; his lips began to tremble at once; his pencil made a zigzag.

"A hundred and twenty-one rubles plus twelve rubles ten kopeks..." Porphiry Vladimirich murmured, trying to forget the unpleasant impression of the moan.

But the moans grew more and more frequent and at last became quite disturbing. It was so difficult to continue work that Judas left his desk. At first he walked about the room trying not to listen, but curiosity gradually got the upper hand over cowardice. He stealthily opened his study door, thrust his head into the darkness of the adjoining room and listened in an expectant attitude.

"Dear me! I believe they've forgotten to light the sanctuary lamp before Our Lady's image!" flitted through his mind.

Someone's anxious, hurried step was heard in the passage. Porphiry Vladimirich hastily drew in his head, noiselessly shut the study door and ran on tiptoe towards the icon. A second later he was "in readiness", so that when the door flew open and Ulita rushed into the room she found him at prayer, his hands folded before him.

"I am afraid our Yevpraxeya may give up the ghost," said Ulita, without any consideration for Judas's devotions.

Porphiry Vladimirich, however, did not even turn to her but moved his lips more rapidly and instead of an answer waved one hand in the air as though driving away a persistent fly.

"It's no use your waving your hand! I tell you, Yevpraxeya is in a bad way—she may die any moment!" Ulita insisted rudely.

This time Judas did turn to her, but his face looked as bland and serene as though in contemplating the Deity he had left all earthly care behind and simply could not understand why anyone should want to disturb him.

"Though it's a sin to scold when one is at prayers, yet as a mere man I cannot but point out to you that

I've asked you time and again not to disturb me at my devotions!" he said in a voice suitable to the mood of prayer, allowing himself however to shake his head as a sign of Christian reproach. "Well, what is it now?"

"What can it be except that Yevpraxeya is in great pain and cannot be delivered! One might think it was the first time you heard of it! Oh, you.... You could come and have a look at her, at least!"

"What is there for me to see? I am not a doctor, am I? I cannot give any advice. Besides, I know nothing, nothing at all about your affairs. I know there is an invalid in the house, but what her illness is and what caused it, I confess I have never had the interest to inquire. One thing I can advise you is to send for the priest if the invalid is bad! You can send for the priest, pray with him, light the sanctuary lamps ... and afterwards the priest and I can have some tea!"

Porphiry Vladimirich was very pleased with himself for having spoken so explicitly at a decisive moment like this. He looked at Ulita brightly and confidently as though saying, "Catch me now if you can!" Even Ulita was at a loss in the face of such serenity.

"Do come! Have a look at her!" she repeated.

"I won't come because I have no business there. If there were any need for it I would have gone without your asking. If I had to walk three miles on business I'd go; if I had to walk seven—I'd go just the same! It might be frosty or stormy outdoors but I'd walk on and on! Because I should know that I had business to attend to and must go!"

Ulita fancied she was asleep and in her dream saw Satan himself holding forth before her.

"To send for the priest now, that's a different matter. That would be sensible. Prayer—do you know what it says in the Gospel about prayer? Prayer is 'the healing of the sick'—that's what it says. So you had better see to it! Send for the priest, pray together ... and I'll pray at the same time. You pray in the icon-room, and I'll ask God for grace here, in my study.... We'll join forces: you do it there, and I here—and we may find that our prayers have reached God right enough!"

They sent for the priest, but before he arrived Yevpraxeya was delivered, in torments and agony. Porphiry Vladimirich could guess from the sudden running to and fro and the banging of doors at the other end of the house that something decisive had happened. And indeed, a few minutes later, hurried steps were heard in the passage again and Ulita rushed into the study holding in her arms a tiny creature wrapped up in something white.

"Here! Look!" she announced solemnly, bringing the child right up to Porphiry Vladimirich's face.

Judas seemed to hesitate for a moment, his body swayed forward and a tiny spark flashed in his eyes. But it was only for a moment because he immediately turned away from the baby in disgust and waved it away with both hands.

"No, no! I am afraid of them. . . . I don't like them! Go . . . go!..." he muttered, his whole face expressive of his unutterable aversion.

"You might ask at least whether it is a boy or a girl!" Ulita admonished him.

"No, no . . . why should I? It has nothing to do with me! It's your affair and I know nothing about it. . . . I know nothing and there's no need for me to know. . . . Go away, for Christ's sake!"

Again it was like a vision of Satan. . . . It made Ulita's blood boil.

"I have a good mind to throw him on the sofa . . . for you to nurse!" she threatened.

But Judas was not one to be easily intimidated. While Ulita was uttering her threat he had already turned to the icon and was modestly lifting his arms to heaven. He was evidently asking God to forgive all: those who sin "wittingly or unwittingly, by thought, word or deed", and thanking Him that he was not a thief, or a money-lender, or a fornicator, and that God in His mercy had firmly planted his feet in the path of righteousness. His very nose quivered with emotion so that after watching him for a time Ulita cursed and went away.

"Here, God has taken away one Volodya and given me another!" suddenly flashed through his

mind quite inappropriately but he instantly noticed this unexpected play of thought and dismissed it in disgust.

The priest came and held a service. Judas heard the chorister droning: "Mother of God, protect us," and could not resist joining in. Ulita ran up and called in at the door:

"They've christened him Vladimir!"

The strange coincidence of this fact with the aberration of thought that had just made him think of the Volodya who died moved Judas exceedingly. He saw in this the finger of God and said to himself, this time not trying to dismiss the idea:

"Well, that's splendid! God has taken one Volodya and given me another! That's what God does! One loses something and thinks he is never going to recover it, and behold, God makes up for it a hundredfold in some other way!"

At last he was told that the samovar was ready and that the priest was waiting in the dining-room. By now Porphiry Vladimirich was completely at peace with the world. He found Father Alexander in the dining-room waiting for him. The Golovlyovo priest was a worldly-wise man and he endeavoured to maintain his relations with Judas on a social footing; but he bore in mind too that services were held at the Golovlyovo house every Saturday and also on the eve of great holidays, and a special service on the first of every month—which meant an income of quite a hundred rubles a year for the clergy. He was aware, too, that the boundary between the Golovlyov and the church property had not yet been properly fixed and that more than once, driving past the priest's meadow, Judas had said, "A lovely meadow, that!" And so Father Alexander's social manner was not unmixed with apprehension which prompted him to assume whenever he met Porphiry Vladimirich a serene and joyful expression though he had no reason for it. And when Judas propounded heretical views with regard to ways of Providence, future life and so on, Father Alexander, though not directly approving of these speculations, did not regard them as blasphemous or im-

pious, but merely as daring flights of fancy to which the gentry were prone.

When Judas came in, the priest blessed him hastily and still more hastily drew his hand away as though afraid that the "blood-sucker" would bite him. He was about to congratulate him on the birth of Vladimir but thought better of it, not knowing what Judas's attitude to the event might be.

"It is rather foggy today," the priest began. "The popular belief, in which, however, there is a share of superstition, is that such weather is a sign of thaw."

"Or maybe there will be a frost; we are thinking of thaw and God will go and send us frost!" Judas responded, sitting down fussily and almost cheerfully to the tea-table, attended to on this occasion by the footman Prokhor.

"It is true that in his dreams man often seeks to attain the unattainable and to approach the unapproachable, and in consequence finds an occasion for repentance or grief itself."

"And so we ought to steer clear of any omens or predictions, and be content with what God sends us. If He sends us warmth—we shall be glad of warmth; if He sends us frost—we shall welcome frost too! We'll have our stoves heated bright and hot, and those who are setting out on a journey will wrap their coats closer round them, and keep nice and warm!"

"That is true!"

"Many people nowadays like to go round a subject, and say this isn't as it should be, and that isn't to their liking, and the other should have been different, but I don't like that. I don't go in for subtleties myself and don't approve of it in others. It's trying to be too clever—that's what I think it is."

"Yes, that is true, too."

"We are all pilgrims in this world; that's how I look upon myself! To have a drink of tea, now, or to take a little light refreshment . . . that is permitted us! Because God has given us a body and other parts. . . . Even the government doesn't forbid it: eat you may, it says, but you must hold your tongues!"

"You are quite right there, too!" The priest gave a pleased grunt and as a token of inward joy knocked the bottom of his empty glass against the saucer.

"My opinion is that man has been given intellect not in order to probe the unknown, but to refrain from sin. Suppose, for instance, I feel my flesh weakening or giving in to temptation and seek the help of my intelligence to overcome the weakness—then I am acting rightly! Because in such cases intelligence can really be of help!"

"But faith more so," the priest corrected him slightly.

"Faith has its own province, and so has intelligence. Faith points out the purpose, and intelligence discovers the means. It knocks at one door, tries another . . . it wanders about and in doing so discovers something useful. Those different medicines, now: herbs, decoctions, plasters—all that has been discovered by our intelligence. But it must all be in accordance with faith if it is to do us good and not harm."

"I have nothing to say against that either."

"I once read a book, Father, and it said there that one must not despise the services of the intellect if it be directed by faith, for a man without intellect soon becomes a plaything of passions. I believe, indeed, that the Fall was due to the fact that Satan in the shape of a serpent obscured man's intelligence."

The priest did not contradict this but expressed no approval either, for he did not yet see what Judas was driving at.

"We often find that men sin not only in thought but actually commit crimes—and all through lack of intellect. The flesh leads one into temptation, and if intelligence is lacking—the man is headed for perdition. He is eager for pleasure and soft living and gaiety, and especially if it's a case of the fair sex . . . how is one to protect oneself if one doesn't use one's intelligence? But if I use it, I take a little camphor oil and rub myself here, sprinkle myself there—and behold, the temptation is gone!"

Judas paused as though waiting to see what the priest would say to it, but Father Alexander, still perplexed

as to Judas's object, merely grunted and made an utterly irrelevant remark:

"I have some fowls in my yard . . . they are all in a flurry because of the equinox: they run about, scuttle to and fro and don't know what to do with themselves!"

"It is all because neither birds nor beasts nor reptiles have any intellect. What sort of creature is a bird, now? It has no troubles, no cares—it just flies about! I looked out of the window this morning: the sparrows were pecking in the manure—that's all they want! But man can't be content with that."

"And yet, in certain cases the Scripture points to the birds of heaven as an example to us!"

"In certain cases—yes. We must imitate the birds in cases when we can be saved by faith alone without intelligence. Praying, for instance, or writing poetry. . . ."

Porphiry Vladimirich paused. He was a babbler by temperament and in his heart he longed to discuss the event of the day. But the form in which he could decently put forward his views on the subject was evidently not yet ripe in his mind.

"Hens do not need intelligence," he said at last, "because they have no temptations. Or, rather, they have temptations but no one punishes them for giving in to them. Everything is natural with them: they have no property to look after, no legal marriages, and consequently no widowhood. They haven't to stand to answer either before God or before their superiors: they have only one superior—the cock!"

"The cock! That's quite true. He is like the Turkish sultan with them."

"But man has so ordered his life that there is nothing natural about it, and so he needs a great deal of intellect. He must take care not to fall into sin himself and not to lead others into temptation. Isn't it so, Father?"

"It's perfectly true. The Scripture advises us to pluck out the offending eye."

"Yes, if one understands it literally; but one may contrive for the eye not to be tempted without plucking it out. One must take recourse to prayer more often, and subdue carnal desires. Take me, for instance: I am still

in my prime, and you wouldn't call me feeble either. . . . Well, and I have female servants too . . . but that doesn't trouble me in the least! I know one cannot do without servants, and so I keep them! I keep menservants and women servants too—all kinds of servants. One needs women servants too, you know—to go to the cellar, to pour out tea, to see to the provisions. . . . Well, bless them! They do their work, I do mine; that's how we get on!"

As he said this Judas tried to look the priest in the eye; the priest, too, for his part, tried to look into Judas's eyes. Fortunately, a candle stood between them so that they could look at each other as much as they liked and see nothing but the flame of the candle.

"And besides, I reason in this way: if one allows familiarity with servants, they are sure to start taking liberties. There will be all sorts of upsets, rudeness and dissensions: you say a word and she says two. . . . And I avoid all that."

The priest had been looking at Judas so intently that everything began to swim before his eyes. Feeling that good manners required that one should contribute something to the general conversation from time to time, he shook his head and said:

"Hm. . . ."

"But if one behaves as some others do . . . for instance, as my good neighbour Mr. Anpetov or my other good neighbour Mr. Utrobin . . . it's easy enough to fall into sin. That Mr. Utrobin now: he has some five or six of those little horrors playing about in the yard. But I don't want that. What I say is this: if God has taken away my guardian angel, so it is His holy will that I should be a widower. And if by the grace of God I am a widower, I must live in chastity and keep my bed undefiled. Isn't it so, Father?"

"It's hard, sir!"

"I know it's hard, but still I abide by it. Some say, 'It's hard,' and I say the harder the better, if only God gives one strength. Not everyone can have things sweet and easy—some must endure hardships for the sake of our Lord! If you deny yourself *here*—you will be com-

pensated *there*! *Here* we call it hardship, but *there* it is called merit! Is it right, what I say?"

"Couldn't be more so."

"Merits now, there's something to be said about merits too. They are not equal, you know. Some merits are great and others small. Yes, indeed."

"Why, of course they are not equal. There's all the difference between great merit and small!"

"That's just what I say. If a man behaves circumspectly, does not indulge in bad language or in empty chatter, does not judge others, never hurts them or takes away what is theirs ... and if he is careful, too, about those temptations—such a man will always be at peace with his conscience. And no mud will stick to him ever! And if someone does speak evil of him behind his back, to my mind he need not even consider such talk. Dismiss it with contempt—that's all."

"In such cases Christian rules recommend forgiveness by preference."

"Well, forgive it too! That's what I always do: if someone speaks evil of me I forgive him and pray for him into the bargain! It's good for him that a prayer about him should reach God, and it's good for me: I have prayed and forgotten all about it!"

"That's right now: nothing relieves one's mind more than prayer. Sorrow and anger, and even disease, fly from it like the darkness of night from the sun."

"Well, that's splendid now! And one must always behave so that one's life could be seen from all sides like a candle in a lantern.... Then there would be less evil spoken of one—for there would be no occasion for it! Take us now, for instance: here we have been sitting and conversing together—who could blame us for that? And now we'll go and say our prayers, and then go bye-bye. And tomorrow we'll get up again ... isn't it so, Father?"

Judas got up and noisily moved back his chair as a sign that the conversation was over. The priest stood up too and raised his hand for blessing; but as a special favour Porphyry Vladimirich caught his hand and pressed it in both of his.

"So you have named him Vladimir, Father?" he asked, sadly motioning with his head in the direction of Yevpraxeya's room.

"In honour of the holy prince St. Vladimir, sir."

"Well, that's splendid. She is a good, faithful servant, but intelligence is not her strong point! That's how it happens that such people commit ... for-ni-ca-tion!"

All next day Porphiry Vladimirich remained in his study praying for guidance. The day after he appeared at breakfast not in his dressing-gown as usual, but wearing a frock-coat; this was always a sign that he intended doing something decisive. His face was pale, but glowing with spiritual light; a blissful smile played about his lips; his eyes had a kindly, forgiving expression; the tip of his nose, through excess in devotions, was slightly pink. He drank his three glasses of tea in silence and in the interval between the gulps moved his lips, folded his hands and gazed at the icon as though, in spite of his pious exertions the day before, he were still awaiting help and guidance. After swallowing the last gulp he sent for Uлита and stationed himself before the icon, to fortify himself once more by communing with the Deity, and also to show Uлита that what was going to happen would be not his doing but God's. Uлита, however, understood from the first glance at Judas's face that in the depths of his heart he was determined on some perfidy.

"Here I have been praying!" Porphiry Vladimirich began and as a sign of submission to God's holy will bent his head and made a gesture of resignation.

"That's a good thing," Uлита answered with a note of such sharp and obvious understanding in her voice that Judas looked up.

She was standing before him in her usual attitude, her arms crossed and her chin resting in her hand; but her face was alight with merriment. Porphiry Vladimirich shook his head as a sign of Christian reproach.

"I suppose God has sent you grace?" Uлита continued, unabashed by his warning movement.

"You are always blaspheming!" Judas could not resist saying. "The number of times I tried to correct you with

jokes and kindness but you are still at it! You have an evil tongue . . . a viper's tongue!"

"I fancy I haven't said anything. . . . It's always said that if you pray, God sends you grace!"

"That's just it, you 'fancy'! But you mustn't babble out all you 'fancy', you must hold your tongue sometimes. I was going to talk seriously, and she trots out her fancies!"

Instead of answering, Ulita merely shifted from one foot to the other, as though to indicate by that movement that she knew in advance all that Porphiry Vladimirich could have to say to her.

"Well, then, listen to me!" Judas began. "I prayed yesterday, and again today, and what it comes to is that however it is we must make arrangements for Volodya."

"Of course we must! He isn't a puppy—you can't drown him."

"Keep quiet a moment. Let me say a word . . . oh, you viper! Well, so what I'm saying is this: however it is we must find a home for Volodya. In the first place, we must take pity on Yevpraxeya, and secondly—we must make a man of him."

Porphiry Vladimirich glanced at Ulita, probably hoping that she would have a good long chat with him on the subject, but she treated the matter simply and even cynically.

"Is it me who is to take him to the Home?" she asked, looking him straight in the eyes.

"Oh me, oh my!" Judas exclaimed. "So you've settled it all, have you, Miss Quick-Wits? Ah, Ulita, Ulita! You are always on the hop! It's all fuss chatter with you! But how do you know: maybe I haven't even thought of the Home! Maybe I . . . have thought of something else for Volodya?"

"Well, if you have, there's no harm in that."

"So what I'm saying is this: although I am sorry for Volodya, yet, if one considers it and thinks it over, it isn't the thing for us to keep him at home."

"Of course not! What will people say? They'll say: how come there's a strange little boy at Golovlyov's house?"

"Yes, that too, but there's something else as well: it would not be good for him to live at home. His mother is young—she would spoil him; and I, in my old age... although it has nothing to do with me but for his mother's faithful service, I shouldn't wonder if I spoiled him too. I am afraid I might be too lenient now and then. What with this and that... and his mother weeping and crying instead of giving the boy a whipping for being naughty—one would simply let it go! Isn't it so?"

"That's true. You would get tired of it."

"And I want everything to be done nicely and properly. I want Volodya to grow up into a fine man, a servant to God and a loyal subject to the tsar. So that if God blesses him to be a peasant, he should know how to work on the land.... To mow, or plough, or chop wood—a little of all that, you know. And if it is his fate to be something else, that he should know a trade or a profession. I hear some come out of there to be teachers!"

"Out of the Home? Oh, they make them generals in the army straight away!"

"Not generals, but still.... Maybe Volodya will turn out to be somebody famous. The care they are given there is excellent, I know that myself. Their little cots are beautifully clean, the wet-nurses are healthy, the babies are dressed in white little shirts, they have feeding-bottles, comforters, napkins.... Everything, in short!"

"What could be better... for the by-blows!"

"And if he is put out to be nursed by a peasant woman, well and good. He will get used to work from childhood, and work, you know, is as good as prayer! We, now—we pray properly: we stand before an icon and make the sign of the cross, and if our prayer finds favour with God, He rewards us for it. But the peasant is busy working. He might be glad to pray properly, but he hardly has time for it even on holidays. But, still, God sees his labours and rewards him for his work as He does us for our prayers. It is not given to everyone to live in palaces and skip about at dances—some must live in smoky little huts and look after our mother earth!"

And which is the happier, one cannot say. One man may live in a palace, in the lap of luxury, but shed tears through gold, and another may have straw for his bed, and bread and kvass for his fare, and yet have a paradise in his heart! Isn't it right what I say?"

"What could be better than paradise in one's heart!"

"Well, so that's what we shall do, my dear. You take that naughty little Volodya, wrap him up as warm and snug as can be and drive with him post-haste to Moscow. I'll have a carriage rigged out for you, a pair of horses harnessed; the roads are nice and smooth now, no bumps or hollows—you just sit in comfort and drive along! But mind that you do the whole thing properly—in my style, as we do it at Golovlyovo, as *I* like it! The feeding-bottle and the comforter must be nice and clean . . . and mind you have plenty of shirts and sheets and swaddling-clothes and napkins and blankets—everything! Take all you want! Demand! And if they don't give you things, you get hold of me—appeal to your old master! And when you arrive in Moscow, put up at an inn. Ask anything you want in the way of food or tea! Ah, Volodya, Volodya! What a shame, what a shame! I am sorry to part with you, but there is nothing for it, my boy! You will see for yourself in time that it was for your own good, and you'll be grateful!"

Judas slightly raised his arms and fluttered his lips as a sign of inward prayer. This did not prevent him, however, from glancing at Ulita and noticing the sarcastic expression that flitted over her face.

"What is it? Do you wish to say something?" he asked her.

"No, nothing. Of course he'll be very grateful if he ever tracks down his benefactors."

"Ah, you foolish, foolish woman! As though we were going to leave him there without a ticket! You must bring the ticket back, and from that we shall track him down ourselves when the time comes. They'll bring him up a nice, healthy boy and will put some sense into him and then we'll come with our ticket and say, 'Give us back our naughty little Volodya!' With a ticket we can fish him out from the bottom of the sea. . . . Isn't it so?"

Ulita made no answer but scowled more sarcastically than ever. Porphiry Vladimirich could contain himself no longer.

"Oh, you viper!" he said. "You've got the devil in you ... so help me! Well, that will do. Tomorrow at daybreak you take Volodya and be quick about it so that Yevpraxeya doesn't hear, and off to Moscow with him, with God's blessing. Do you know the Foundling Home?"

"I have taken them there before," Ulita answered, as though hinting at something in the past.

"If so, I have nothing to teach you. You must know your way about, then. Mind you place him there and bow low to the superiors—like this."

Porphiry Vladimirich stood up and bowed, touching the ground with his hand.

"See that he's looked after properly there, not just anyhow, but really well! And be sure you have his ticket given you. Don't forget! With the ticket we can always find him later on. I'll give you two twenty-five-ruble notes for the expenses. I know how it is. You have to tip a man here, to grease a palm there. . . . Ah, sinners, that we are! We are all human, we all want sweets and playthings! Take our Volodya now—he is no bigger than a thumb-nail and see what a lot of money he is costing already!"

Having said this, Judas crossed himself and bowed low to Ulita, silently bidding her to take good care of the naughty little Volodya. The future of his illegitimate offspring was arranged in the simplest possible way.

The morning after this conversation, while the young mother was tossing about in fever and delirium, Porphiry Vladimirich stood at the dining-room window moving his lips and making the sign of the cross over the pane. A covered sledge carrying away Volodya was leaving the courtyard. It reached the top of the hill, went past the church, turned to the left and disappeared in the village. Judas made the sign of the cross for the last time and heaved a sigh.

“Father Alexander talked of thaw the other day,” he said to himself, “and here God has sent us frost instead of thaw! And such a frost, too! That’s how it always is with us. We dream and build castles in the air and try to be clever and outdo God Himself—and God turns all our highflown ideas to naught in a minute!”

THE ESCHEAT*

Judas's death agony dated from the time when the resource of empty talk in which he indulged so readily began to fail him. Desolation reigned round him: some had died, others had gone away. Even Anninka, who had nothing to look forward to but the miserable lot of a travelling actress, was not tempted by the Golovlyovo luxuries. There was only Yevpraxeya left, but apart from the fact that that was a very limited resource, something had obviously gone wrong with her, and Judas clearly saw that his happy days had gone for ever.

Hitherto Yevpraxeya had been so defenceless that Porphiry Vladimirich could tyrannise over her without any misgivings. Her mind was so little developed and her nature so flaccid that she was not even conscious of this tyranny. While Judas was babbling away, she looked at him with vacant eyes, thinking of something else. But now she suddenly understood something, and the immediate result of this awakening of thought was a bitter and invincible, though as yet unconscious, aversion.

Anninka's visit to Golovlyovo had evidently left an impression on Yevpraxeya's mind. Although she could not quite understand what sort of pain her casual conversations with Anninka had caused her, yet inwardly she was in a state of utter turmoil. It had never entered her head before to ask why, as soon as he met somebody, Porphiry Vladimirich immediately began entangling him in a regular network of phrases in which there was noth-

* Saltykov-Shchedrin uses this word in a broad social and moral sense, characterising the destiny of the Golovlyovs and their whole class, which is historically doomed and also has no heirs and no future.—*Ed.*

ing to take hold of but which made one feel horribly depressed. Now it became clear to her that Judas did not really talk in order to tell you something, but merely "pestered" you, so that it wouldn't be a bad idea to pull him up and make him feel it was time "he eased off a bit". She began listening to his ceaseless flow of words more attentively and understood only one thing about it: that Judas really did plague and pester one with his buzzing.

"The young miss had said he didn't himself know why he was talking," she reasoned with herself. "But he does—it's his spite makes him do it! He knows when a person is at his mercy and twists him about as he pleases!"

This, however, was only a factor of secondary importance. The chief effect of Anninka's visit to Golovlyovo was to rouse in Yevpraxeya the instincts of youth. Until then those instincts had merely smouldered dimly in her; now they flared up into a warm and obstinate flame. She grasped a great deal of what had left her completely unconcerned before. Take this, for instance: there must have been a good reason why Anninka had refused to stay at Golovlyovo and said straight out that it was "frightening". Why was it? Simply because she was young, because she wanted "to live". And she, Yevpraxeya, was young also ... yes, young! It only looked as if her youth was buried under a layer of fat, but no—at times she was ever so keenly aware of it. It seemed to call her, to beckon to her, dying down one moment and flaring up the next. She had thought once that she would be content with Judas, but now.... "Oh, you rotten old stump! The way you got round me! But wouldn't it be nice to have a real lover, a young one! We'd lie close together, and he'd kiss and pet me, and whisper sweet words into my ear, and say I was his soft white dumpling! Oh, you damned scarecrow, to think of your seducing me with your old carcass! I expect the Pogorelka young lady has a sweetheart! I am sure she has! No wonder she gathered her skirts and made off. And here I've got to sit within these four walls waiting for the old creature's fancy to move him!"

Yevpraxeya did not of course rebel openly straight away, but having once entered on that path she never left it. She searched for grievances, recalled the past, and while Judas did not even suspect that a hidden ferment was going on in her, she was silently working herself up to hate him. Her complaints at first were of a general nature as "He's ruined my life"; then came comparisons: "There's Pelageya, the Mazulino housekeeper—she doesn't have to move a finger and wears silk dresses too. She doesn't have to go to the cattle sheds or to the cellar but just sits in her room and embroiders with beads all day." All these protests and grievances always ended in one general outcry:

"Oh, how I hate you now, how sick and tired you make me! I hate you, hate you!"

This main grievance was reinforced by another, which was particularly valuable as a possible and excellent pretext for attack: namely, the memories of her confinement and the disappearance of her son Volodya.

At the time of the disappearance Yevpraxeya's reaction to this fact was somewhat dull. Porphyry Vladimirovich merely told her that the baby had been placed in good hands and gave her a new shawl to comfort her. Then the subject was dropped and things went on as before. Indeed, Yevpraxeya threw herself more zealously than ever into housekeeping, as though trying to find an outlet for her disappointed motherhood. But whether the maternal feeling still secretly glowed in Yevpraxeya's heart or whether it was merely a fancy on her part, the memory of Volodya suddenly revived in her. And it revived just when Yevpraxeya felt a breath of something fresh, unfettered and free, when she felt that there was another way of living, quite different from the life at Golovlyovo. The chance was naturally much too good to be ignored.

"To think what he's done!" she egged herself on. "Robbed me of my child. Just like drowning a puppy in a pool!"

Gradually this idea gained complete possession of her. She came to believe that she passionately longed to have her child back with her, and the more insistent was her

desire, the greater was her anger against Porphiry Vladimirich.

"I would have had something to cheer me, anyway! Volodya! My little one! My own baby! Where are you, I wonder? I expect they packed you off to some rough peasant woman! Ah, perdition take you, you damned gentry! You think nothing of begetting a lot of brats and flinging them into a ditch like puppies; you think no one will call you to task! I had much better have cut my throat there and then than let that filthy brute make game of me!"

She grew to hate him, she longed to vex him, to plague him, to poison his life. She opened the worst kind of war against him—a war of petty bickering, continual pin-pricks and taunting. But it was only in a war of that kind Porphiry Vladimirich could be defeated.

One day at breakfast Porphiry Vladimirich had a very unpleasant surprise. Usually at that meal he poured out floods of his putrid eloquence while Yevpraxeya listened to him in silence, holding a saucer of tea in her hand and a lump of sugar between her teeth, and snorting occasionally. That day warm, newly-baked bread had been served for breakfast, and he had just begun to develop the idea that there were two kinds of bread, the visible which we *eat* to sustain our body and the invisible, spiritual bread of which we *partake* to nourish our soul, when suddenly Yevpraxeya interrupted him in a most unceremonious way.

"They say Pelageya has a jolly time of it at Mazulino," she began, turning her whole body round to the window and swinging her crossed feet in a saucy manner.

Judas started slightly with surprise, but at first attached no particular importance to the incident.

"And if we go without the visible bread for long," he continued, "we feel bodily hunger; but if for any length of time we are deprived of the spiritual bread...."

"I say, Pelageya has a jolly time of it at Mazulino," Yevpraxeya interrupted him again, this time obviously with some object.

Porphiry Vladimirich glanced at her in amazement, but refrained from pulling her up, as though scenting trouble.

"If Pelageya has a jolly time—well and good, bless her," he answered meekly.

"Her master," Yevpraxeya rambled on, "gives her no trouble at all, he doesn't force her to work, and what's more he dresses her in nothing but silk any day of the week."

Porphiry Vladimirich's amazement mounted. Yevpraxeya's words were so utterly inconsequent that he was quite at a loss.

"And she has a different dress every day," Yevpraxeya rambled on, as though in delirium. "Today it's one dress, tomorrow another, and on holidays a special one. And they drive to church in a coach-and-four, first she, then the master. And the priest has the bells rung as soon as he sees the carriage. And afterwards she sits in her room. If the master wishes to spend his time with her, she receives him, and if not, she just talks to her maid, or embroiders with beads."

"Well, what of it?" Porphiry Vladimirich recovered the use of his tongue at last.

"Why, just that Pelageya has such a lovely time."

"And I suppose you think you have a bad time? Oh me, oh my! What a . . . greedy creature you are!"

Had Yevpraxeya said nothing to this, Porphiry Vladimirich would of course have poured out a torrent of idle words, completely drowning all her stupid hints that had disturbed the orderly flow of his prattle. But Yevpraxeya was evidently in no mood to be silent.

"Of course," she snapped back, "I have a jolly time too! I am not in rags, and that's something to be thankful for! Last year you bought me two cotton dresses . . . coughed up ten rubles for them."

"And have you forgotten the woollen dress? And who has just had a new shawl? Oh me, oh my!"

For answer Yevpraxeya propped her elbow on the table, balancing her saucer of tea in her fingers, and threw at Judas a side glance full of such profound contempt that, not being used to it, he felt quite frightened.

"And do you know how God punishes ingratitude?" he stammered hesitatingly, hoping that perhaps the mention of God would sober the silly woman who had for no reason at all gone off the lines. But instead of being impressed, Yevpraxeya cut him short at once.

"It's no use trying to bamboozle me! Leave God out of it," she said, "I am not a child. I've had too much of it. You've bullied me and lorded it over me long enough!"

Porphiry Vladimirich was silent. His glass of tea was almost cold, but he did not touch it. His face was pale, his lips twitched slightly as though vainly trying to smile.

"These are Anninka's tricks. She egged you on, the viper!" he said at last, hardly aware of what he was saying however.

"What tricks?"

"Why, your beginning to talk back to me. . . . She, she taught you that. It couldn't have been anyone else," Porphiry Vladimirich said in agitation. "Just look at her suddenly wanting silk dresses! But do you know, you shameless hussy, what women of your class wear silk?"

"Tell me, then I'll know."

"Why, the most . . . the most disreputable ones. Only they dress in silk!"

But even this did not bring Yevpraxeya to her senses. On the contrary, she answered with a kind of impudent reasonableness:

"I don't see why they are disreputable. . . . It's the masters' orders. . . . If a gentleman makes love to a girl and gets round her . . . well, she lives with him, of course. We don't spend our time at prayers either, do we, but act the same as the Mazulino master."

"Oh, you. . . . The nasty tongue that you have!"

Porphiry Vladimirich was utterly dumbfounded. He looked open-eyed at his rebellious partner, and a mass of idle words surged within him. But for the first time in his life he vaguely suspected that there are cases when even idle words cannot smother an opponent.

"Well, my dear, I see it's no use talking to you today," he said, getting up from the table.

"It isn't any use today, and it won't be tomorrow . . . nor ever again. Enough! You've had your day! I've done my share of listening—now you listen to me."

At this point Porphiry Vladimirich rushed at her with clenched fists, but she thrust out her breast so resolutely that he was taken aback. Turning to the icon he raised his arms and moved his lips, and then slowly walked away to his study.

He felt uneasy all that day. He had as yet no definite fears for the future, but he was upset by the mere fact that something quite irregular could have happened and happened with impunity. He did not appear at dinner, pretending to be ill, and meekly asked in a voice of feigned weakness to have his meal brought to the study.

In the evening after tea, which, for the first time in his life, passed in absolute silence, he stationed himself as usual before the icon for prayer; but in vain did his lips whisper the holy words. His mind was too agitated to follow even superficially the meaning of what he was saying. A kind of petty but persistent restlessness possessed him; in spite of himself he strained to catch the last echoes of the day still audible in the different corners of the Golovlyovo house. When the last desperate yawn resounded somewhere behind the wall, and then all grew suddenly still, as though sinking deep down to the bottom of a well, he could restrain himself no longer. Noiselessly stealing along the passage he reached Yevpraxeya's room and put his ear to the door. Yevpraxeya was alone and all that could be heard was her saying through her yawns, "O Lord, our Saviour! O Mother of God!" and at the same time giving her sides a good scratch. Porphiry Vladimirich tried the handle but the door was locked.

"Yevpraxeya, are you there?" he called to her.

"Yes, but not for you!" she snapped back so rudely that Judas had no choice but to take himself off in silence to his study.

The following day there was another conversation. As though on purpose, Yevpraxeya chose breakfast time for stinging Porphiry Vladimirich. It was as if she felt instinctively that all his idling was timed to a nicety, so

that a disturbance in the morning caused him pain and uneasiness for the rest of the day.

"I wish I could have a peep at the way some people live!" she began enigmatically.

Porphiry Vladimirich winced. "She is at it again!" he thought but said nothing, waiting to hear what was coming.

"Just to see how young sweethearts spend their time! They walk about the rooms together, admiring each other. He never flings a bad word at her, nor she at him. 'My sweet' and 'my darling' is all they say. So nice and refined!"

This subject was particularly distasteful to Porphiry Vladimirich. Although he made allowances for fornication within the strict limits of necessity, he regarded love-making as a temptation of the devil. But this time again he had not the courage of his convictions, especially as he wanted a drink of tea which had been brewing in a little pot on the samovar for some minutes, while Yevpraxeya had apparently no intention of pouring it out.

"Of course, many of us women are just silly," she went on, rocking herself insolently to and fro on her chair and drumming on the table with her fingers. "Some of us are such ninnies that we are ready to do anything for the sake of a cotton dress, and some will lose themselves for nothing at all!... 'Have as much kvass and as many cucumbers as you like,' and that's all they get out of it. That's something to tempt one, isn't it?"

"Surely it can't be for the sake of gain alone?" Porphiry Vladimirich ventured to remark timidly, watching the teapot, which was steaming by now.

"Who says 'For the sake of gain alone'? Is it me you're calling mercenary?" Yevpraxeya went off at a tangent. "You grudge me my keep, do you? You throw that up at me!"

"I don't throw up anything at you, I merely say it isn't only for the sake of gain that people..."

"You 'merely say'! Mind what you say then! So I serve you for gain, do I? And what gain, may I ask, have I found here? Except kvass and cucumbers?..."

"Come, it's not only kvass and cucumbers..." Porphiry Vladimirich retorted, carried away in his turn.

"Well, what else? Say it, what else?"

"And who sends four sacks of flour to your home every month?"

"Well, four sacks! Anything else?"

"Cereals and oil ... all sorts of things, in fact."

"Yes, cereals and oil... So you grudge that to my parents now! Oh, you..."

"I didn't say I grudged it, it's you..."

"So it's all my fault now! I can't eat a crust of bread without having it thrown up at me, and I'm the one at fault, too!"

Yevpraxeya burst into tears. Meanwhile tea was stewing and stewing on the samovar, so that Porphiry Vladimirich was getting seriously alarmed. He took himself in hand, sat down quietly beside Yevpraxeya and patted her on the back.

"Come, come, pour out the tea ... there's nothing to snivel about!"

Yevpraxeya gave two or three more sobs, pouted and stared dully in front of her.

"You were talking of young people just now," he went on, trying to put a caressing note into his voice, "but after all, you know, you and I ... we are not too old either, are we?"

"What next! Leave me alone!"

"Honestly now! Do you know ... when I was in the department our director wanted me to marry his daughter."

"She must have been a stale piece ... cross-eyed or bandy-legged!"

"No, she was all a young lady should be.... And the way she sang the 'Sarafan'! Oh, how she sang it!"

"She may have sung, but it seems you were no good at seconding."

"No, I think I..."

Porphiry Vladimirich was perplexed. He was not above the ignominy of showing that he too could be a ladies' man. With this object he began rocking his body in an absurd way, and even tried to put his arm round Yev-

praxeya's waist, but she rudely drew away from him and shouted angrily:

"I tell you politely: leave me alone, you devil. I'll scald you with the boiling water if you don't! I don't want your tea. I don't want anything. Just look at him! Grudging me the food I eat! I won't stay here. Christ is my witness, I'll go!"

And she really did go, slamming the door and leaving Porphyry Vladimirich alone in the dining-room.

Judas was completely nonplussed. He began pouring out his tea himself but his hands trembled so that he had to call in the footman to his aid.

"No, this won't do! I must settle it somehow.... I must think it over!" he whispered, walking up and down the dining-room in agitation.

But the trouble was he was incapable of "settling" or "thinking over" anything. His mind was so accustomed to wander from one fantastic object to another, without meeting any hindrance anywhere, that the simplest occurrence of everyday life caught him unawares. He no sooner began to "think something over" than a whole mass of trifles crowded around him, shutting out every glimpse of real life. He was a prey to a kind of inertia, a moral and intellectual anaemia. He longed to turn from real life to the soft bed of phantoms that he could shift from place to place and do as he liked with.

Again he spent the whole day in complete solitude because this time Yevpraxeya did not appear either at dinner or at evening tea. She went for a day's visit to the village priest's and returned only late at night. He could not occupy himself with anything because even trifles seemed to have forsaken him for the moment. One relentless thought tormented him: "I must settle it somehow, I must." He could neither pray nor do his idle calculations. He felt as though he were being attacked by some disease which he could not as yet define. More than once he stopped before the window trying to fasten his wandering mind on something and to distract himself, but in vain. It was early spring, but the trees were still bare and there was not yet any new grass. Black fields stretched into the distance with patches of white snow

here and there in the hollows and low-lying places. The road was black with mud and shining with pools. But he saw it all as through a mist. There was no one in sight near the damp outbuildings, and yet all the doors were wide open; in the house too there was no one within call, although he kept hearing sounds like the distant banging of doors. It would be lovely to become invisible now and to hear what that brood of flunkies were saying about him. Did the wretches understand how good he was to them, or were they speaking evil of him in return for his good fare? One might shovel the food down their greedy throats from morning till night and they'd never be satisfied or think anything of it. It seemed but yesterday that they had started a new barrel of cucumbers and already.... But he no sooner began to forget himself in this thought, reckoning out how many cucumbers there would be in a barrel and what would be the most liberal allowance of cucumbers per person, than a gleam of reality flashed through his mind again, upsetting at once all his calculations.

"Look at her going off, without even asking permission!" came into his head while his eyes wandered through space, trying to make out the priest's house, where at that moment Yevpraxeya was probably pouring out her woes.

Dinner was served. Porphiry Vladimirich sat at the table alone, listlessly eating clear soup (he could not bear clear soup but *she* had ordered it on purpose that day).

"I expect the priest is displeased at her descending upon him like this!" passed through his mind. "It means an extra mouth at dinner. A little cabbage soup and some porridge... and perhaps some meat as well because of the visitor."

His imagination began to play again and he forgot himself once more as though he were dropping asleep. How many extra table-spoonfuls of soup and of porridge would it mean? And what are the priest and his wife saying about Yevpraxeya's visit? How they are cursing her to themselves! All this—the food and the conversation—came vividly before his mind.

"I expect they are all eating out of the same bowl.... Going like that! She could think of nothing better, I suppose! It's wet and muddy outside, not safe to go out. She'll come back with her skirts all bedraggled. Ah, the bitch! Yes, that's just what she is. Yes, I must, I must think of something...."

His thoughts invariably broke off at that point. After dinner he lay down for his usual nap but merely wore himself out tossing and turning from side to side. Yevpraxeya came home after dark and stole into her room so quietly that he did not hear it. He had ordered the servants to be sure and tell him when she returned, but the servants seemed to be in league with her and said nothing. He tried her door but again found it locked.

The following day Yevpraxeya did appear at breakfast, but her talk was more aggressive and menacing than ever.

"I wonder where my darling Volodya is now?" she began in a deliberately tearful voice.

Porphiry Vladimirich's heart sank at the question.

"If only I could have a peep at him! I can just see the hard time he's having there, the darling! And very likely he is already dead too...."

Judas moved his lips in agitation, whispering a prayer.

"We never do things the way everybody else does! Pelageya bore a daughter to the Mazulino gentleman and they at once dressed her up in the finest cambric and rigged up a little pink cot for her.... And the wet-nurse had no end of sarafans and head-dresses given her! But with us ... o-oh ... you!"

Yevpraxeya turned sharply to the window and sighed noisily.

"It's true what they say, that the gentry is a cursed lot! They bring children into the world and throw them away like so many puppies. And it doesn't worry them a bit! They don't answer to anyone for it, as if the Lord Himself couldn't judge them. Not even a wolf would do that to his young!"

Porphiry Vladimirich was simply boiling inwardly. He tried to control himself but at last he said through his teeth:

"I must say . . . you've started a new fashion! It's the third day I am listening to your talk!"

"Well, what if it is a new fashion? Call it that if you like. You aren't the only one to do all the talking—other people can put a word in too! Yes, indeed! You fathered a child and what have you done to it? I expect it's rotting away at some peasant woman's. No one to look after him, no food, no clothes. . . . He lies in the dirt, I expect, sucking a filthy comforter."

She shed a tear and wiped her eyes with a corner of the kerchief round her neck.

"The Pogorelka miss was quite right when she said that it's frightening to be with you. Frightening it is. No joy, no pleasure, nothing but mean tricks. . . . Convicts in prison live better. If I had my baby now, I should have had something to cheer me up, at least. But just think of it! I bore a child and I've been robbed of it!"

Porphiry Vladimirich sat still, moving his head painfully as though he were being pushed to the wall. Groans escaped from his breast.

"Ah, it's hard!" he brought out at last.

"No use saying it's hard! You've brought it on yourself. I really think I'll go to Moscow and have a peep at Volodya. Volodya! My little one! Da-arling! I think I'll go to Moscow, master, what do you say?"

"No need to," Porphiry Vladimirich answered dully.

"Yes, I'll go! I won't ask anyone's permission, and no one can forbid me to go! Because I am a mother!"

"A mother, indeed! You are a whore, that's what you are!" Porphiry Vladimirich broke out at last. "Tell me, what do you want of me?"

Yevpraxeya was evidently not prepared for this question. She stared at Judas in silence, as though wondering what it was she really did want.

"So now you call me a whore!" she cried, bursting into tears.

"Yes, a whore! A whore! That's what you are, curse you!"

Losing all self-control, Porphiry Vladimirich jumped up from his seat and almost ran out of the dining-room.

That was the last outburst that he indulged in. After

that he soon acquired a pinched look, grew dull and timid, whereas Yevpraxeya's persecution of him went on as relentlessly as ever. She had at her disposal the tremendous force of obstinate stupidity, and since that force was always applied to one object only—to pester him, to poison his life—it was really terrible at times. She gradually began to find the arena of the dining-room too small for her, and invaded the study, attacking Judas in his sanctum. (In the old days she would not have dreamed of going there when the master was "busy"). She would now come in, sit down by the window, scratch her shoulder-blades against the window-frame and, staring blear-eyed in front of her, meander on. There was one subject that she came to like particularly—the core of that subject being her threat to leave Golovlyovo. As a matter of fact she had never seriously thought of it and would have been very much perplexed had she suddenly been offered to return to her parents; but she rightly guessed that Porphiry Vladimirich feared her going more than anything. She always approached the subject in a roundabout way, by degrees. She would sit silent for a bit, scratch her ear, and then, as it were suddenly, recall something.

"I expect they are making pancakes at home today."

This introduction made Porphiry Vladimirich turn green with annoyance. He had just begun a very complicated calculation: how many rubles' worth of milk could he sell a year if all the cows in the neighbourhood died and only his, with God's help, remained alive and, moreover, yielded twice as much milk as before. However, in view of Yevpraxeya's coming in and mentioning pancakes, he gave up his work and even tried to force a smile.

"Why are they making pancakes there?" he asked, twisting his face into a grin. "Dear me, yes, of course, it's Commemoration Day. I had quite forgotten, thoughtless me! How dreadful, there's no special dinner prepared in dear Mamma's memory!"

"I wouldn't mind having some pancakes ... my mother's pancakes!"

"Well, who's stopping you? Order some. Tell the cook or Ulita. Ah, Ulita makes excellent pancakes."

"Perhaps she's pleased you in something else as well?" Yevpraxeya said maliciously.

"No, it would be a sin to deny it—Ulita makes excellent pancakes, light and soft. One simply can't stop eating them!"

Porphiry Vladimirich's idea was to distract Yevpraxeya by playful talk and laughter.

"I should like to have some pancakes, but at home, not at Golovlyovo!" she persisted spitefully.

"Well, we can do that too. Get hold of Arkhip the coachman, order a pair of horses, and drive there nicely and comfortably."

"No, what's the good! Once the bird is caught in the net. . . . It was my own foolishness. Who'll want me the way I am now? You yourself called me a whore the other day. . . . What's the use now?"

"Oh me, oh my! Aren't you ashamed to bring such unfair charges against me? Don't you know how God punishes one for slander?"

"You did call me that! You said so straight out. The icon here is my witness. It was in our Lord's presence you said so! Oh, I am sick of Golovlyovo. I'll run away from here, I really will."

Yevpraxeya behaved in a most free and easy manner as she said this: she rocked herself in her chair, scratched herself, picked her nose. She was obviously acting a part, teasing him.

"I wanted to tell you something, Porphiry Vladimirich," she rambled on. "I must go home, you know."

"Go there on a visit, you mean?"

"No, go for good. I shall stay there."

"Why is that? Has anyone hurt you or what?"

"No, no one has, just so . . . I must go some time . . . and besides it's so dull here . . . it makes me scared. The house might be dead. The servants have got out of hand, they are always in the kitchen or in their own quarters, and there I'm all alone in the whole house. Someone might come in and cut my throat the way it is. When I go to bed at night I can hear whispers in every corner."

Day followed day, however, and Yevpraxeya did not show any intention of carrying out her threats. Never-

theless that threat had a most crushing effect on Porphyry Vladimirich. He suddenly seemed to understand that, although he slaved away from morning till night at his so-called work, he did not really do anything, and would find himself without dinner, clean linen, or decent clothes if someone did not supervise the smooth working of his daily routine. So far he had not seemed to be conscious of life or to be aware that it had an external setting which did not come into being of itself. His days followed a once established order. Everything in the house centred round him and existed for his sake. Everything was done at the appointed time, every object was in its proper place—in short, such unfailing orderliness reigned in all things that he practically failed to notice it. Because of this established order he could devote himself to his heart's content to idle thinking and idle talk without any fear that the stings of life around him might one day force him to face reality. True, all this artificial structure hung by a thread; but a man so entirely self-centred as he was not likely to be struck by the thought that that thread was very fine and easily broken. He fancied that his life had been regulated once and for all.... And suddenly everything was to crumble away at one stupid phrase, "No, what's the good? I'd better go." Judas was completely at a loss. "What if she really does go?" he thought. He began planning all sorts of absurd arrangements in order to retain her somehow, and actually made up his mind to such concessions in favour of Yevpraxeya's rebellious youth as would never have occurred to him before.

"Lord, have mercy on us!" he cried out in disgust when he pictured to himself with mortifying vividness a possible encounter with Arkhip the coachman or Ignat the accountant.

Soon, however, he came to the conclusion that his fears of Yevpraxeya's leaving had been largely unfounded; and after that his life suddenly took a new and completely unexpected turn. Yevpraxeya did not go away and what was more she even relented noticeably in her pestering of him. Instead, she completely neglected Porphyry Vladimirich. It was May, the weather was

lovely, and she was hardly ever in the house now. It was only from the banging of doors that Judas guessed that she had run into her room for something and immediately disappeared again. Getting up in the morning he failed to find his clothes laid out as usual, and had to carry on long negotiations to obtain a change of linen; his tea and dinner were served either too early or too late; he was waited upon by the footman Prokhor, never quite sober, who appeared at table in a stained coat, with a smell of some disgusting mixture of fish and vodka always about him.

But Porphyry Vladimirich was glad that at any rate Yevpraxeya left him in peace. He even resigned himself to the disorder so long as he knew that there was someone in the house who had charge of it. What he feared was not so much the discomfort as the thought that he might have to take a personal part in the practical details of life. He pictured to himself with horror that a moment might come when he would have to give orders, to supervise, to make decisions. In the anticipation of that moment he tried to stifle every protest, he closed his eyes to the anarchy that reigned in the house, made himself scarce, said nothing. And meanwhile unreserved merry-making was going on in the courtyard every day. With the warm weather Golovlyovo, that had always been sedate and even gloomy, seemed to come to life. In the evening all the servants and their families, old and young, the workers and those pensioned off, streamed out of doors. They sang, played the accordion, laughed, shrieked, had games of catch. Ignat the accountant wore a new, flaming-red shirt and an extremely narrow jacket that did not meet across his manly chest; Arkhip the coachman had taken unwarranted possession of the holiday driving outfit—the silk shirt and velveteen sleeveless jerkin—and the two were obvious rivals in claiming Yevpraxeya's heart. Yevpraxeya played with them both and dashed like mad from one to the other. Porphyry Vladimirich was afraid of looking out of the window for fear of witnessing a love scene, but he could not help hearing what was going on. At times his ears caught the sound of a heavy smack: it was Arkhip the coachman

"giving one" to Yevpraxeya with his open palm as he chased her in the "catch who can" (she was not cross but merely squatted a little); at times snatches of conversation reached him:

"Yevpraxeya Nikitishna! I say, Yevpraxeya Nikitishna!" the drunken Prokhor was calling from the front steps.

"What d'you want?"

"The key of the tea-caddy, please, master wants his tea."

"He can wait . . . the scarecrow."

In a short time Porphyry Vladimirich came to shun all contact with the outside world. The whole of his daily routine had been upset and distorted but he appeared to take no notice of it any longer. All he asked of life was that he should not be disturbed in his last refuge—his study. Just as once he had been tiresome and exacting towards those about him, so now he was timid and sullenly submissive. He seemed to have lost all touch with real life. His one wish was to hear nothing and to see no one. Yevpraxeya might not show herself in the house for days at a time, the servants might take any liberties they liked, idling in the courtyard—he was as indifferent to all these facts as though they did not exist. In the old days, had the accountant been in the least remiss in drawing up reports about the various branches of estate management he would have plagued him to death with his admonitions; now he had to stay for weeks without any reports at all, and he did not mind except on the rare occasions when he needed some figures to confirm his fantastic calculations. To make up for it, once he was by himself in his study he felt he was his own master and was free to indulge in idle thinking to his heart's content. Both his brothers had died victims of an uncontrollable passion for drink; he too suffered from a similar disease, but his was a different sort of drunkenness, a mental intoxication. Shutting himself up in his study and settling down at his writing-table he toiled away from morning till night at fantastic work: he made

all kinds of impossible projects, audited his own accounts, talked to imaginary people, and acted whole scenes in which anyone he happened to think of had a part to play.

The chief element in this whirl of fantastic actions and images was a morbid passion for gain. Although Porphiry Vladimirich had always been mean and pettifogging, he had never derived any benefit from it because all he did was absurdly impractical. He pestered, tormented, and bullied people (chiefly the most defenceless ones, who, so to speak, invited ill-treatment), but more often than not he himself was the loser through being such a nuisance. Now he entirely transferred his activities to an abstract, fantastic world where there was no one to oppose or contradict him, where there existed no weak or strong, no policemen, no justices of the peace (or rather where they existed solely for the sake of defending his interests), and where, consequently, he was free to entangle the whole world in a network of litigation, oppression and provocation.

He enjoyed thinking out ways of tormenting people, ruining them, spoiling their lives, sucking their blood. He went in turn over the various items of his revenue: timber, cattle, corn, meadows, etc., and built round each of them an intricate system of fantastic extortions accompanied by the most complicated calculations of profits to be derived from fines, usury, acts of God, stocks and shares. In short, he created for himself a whole complex world made up of all the sterile ideals of a landowner's idle fancy. And since it all rested upon arbitrary assumptions with regard to supposed payments, a kopek too much or too little provided an opportunity for reconstructing the whole thing and thus varying it *ad infinitum*. When his mind was too tired to follow with due attention the details of his involved financial operations, he occupied it with less exacting fancies. He recalled all the disputes and quarrels he had had with people, not only of recent years but in his early youth as well, and reconstructed them so as to come out victorious from every conflict. He mentally revenged himself on his former colleagues who had outstripped him in the service and wounded his vanity so deeply that he decided to



retire; he revenged himself on his old schoolmates who had once taken advantage of their strength to tease and bully him; on neighbours who had resisted his encroachments and defended their rights; on servants who had been rude or insufficiently respectful to him; on his Mamma for having spent on Pogorelka a great deal of money which "by rights" belonged to him; on his brother Styopka the blockhead for having nicknamed him "Judas"; on his aunt Varvara Mikhailovna for bearing, when no one was any longer expecting it, several children of doubtful parentage, and thus causing the Goryushkino estate to be for ever lost to the Golovlyov family. He revenged himself on the living, and he revenged himself on the dead.

Indulging his fancy in this way he gradually became intoxicated; he felt as though he had wings and he soared above the ground. His eyes glittered, his trembling lips were covered with foam, his face turned pale and breathed menace. And as his imagination expanded, the air around him became crowded with phantoms that engaged him in an imaginary struggle.

His existence was now so full and self-sufficient that he had nothing more to desire. The whole world was at his feet—that is, the poor and limited world within his narrow field of vision. He could vary endlessly the simplest theme, taking it up again and again, and each time giving it a new form. It was a kind of ecstasy, a clairvoyance, something similar to what happens at spiritualistic seances. Uncontrolled imagination creates an illusory reality which, owing to perpetual mental excitement, becomes concrete, almost tangible. It is not faith, it is not conviction—it is spiritual debauchery, an ecstasy. Men cease to be human, their faces are distorted, their eyes glitter, their tongues babble incoherently, their bodies make involuntary movements.

Porphiry Vladimirich was happy. He tightly shut his windows and doors not to hear anything and pulled down the blinds not to see anything. All that was not directly concerned with the world of his fancy he did hurriedly, almost with aversion. When Prokhor, never quite sober, knocked at his door to say that dinner was served he ran impatiently into the dining-room, hurriedly ate his

three courses contrary to all his former habits, and disappeared in his study again. When he met people now, his manner was both timid and stupidly ironical, as though he were afraid and defiant at the same time. He was in a hurry to get up in the morning so as to set to work as soon as possible. He spent less time at his devotions; he uttered the words of the prayers indifferently, without attending to their meaning; he crossed himself and raised his arms carelessly, mechanically. Even the thought of hell and its tortures (with special punishments for each sin) had apparently left him.

Yevpraxeya meanwhile languished in the throes of fleshly lust. Prancing in indecision between Ignat the accountant and Arkhip the coachman, and casting sidelong glances at the red-faced carpenter Ilyusha, who had contracted with his men to repair the cellar, she noticed nothing of what was going on in the house. She thought that the master was up to "some new trick", and many cheerful remarks had been passed on the subject in the friendly company of flunkies, who felt quite unbridled now. But one day she happened to come into the dining-room where Judas sat hastily finishing a piece of roast goose, and she suddenly felt frightened.

Porphiry Vladimirich was wearing his old greasy dressing-gown with tufts of cottonwool coming through in places; he was pale, dishevelled, and had a bristly growth on his cheeks and chin.

"Master dear! What's the matter? What has happened?" she rushed to him in alarm.

But Porphiry Vladimirich merely smiled a stupidly sardonic smile by way of answer, as though to say, "You try and see if you can sting me now!"

"But what is it, master dear? Tell me, what has happened?" she repeated.

He stood up and, fixing upon her a glance full of hatred, said deliberately:

"If you ever dare, you whore, to go into my study again, I'll . . . kill you!"

As a result of this encounter Porphiry Vladimirich's domestic arrangements changed for the better. With no

material cares to hinder him, he wholly abandoned himself to solitude and did not even notice the summer pass. It was the end of August; the days had grown shorter; there was a continual drizzle outside; it was wet underfoot; the trees stood dejectedly, dropping their yellow leaves on the ground. Unbroken stillness reigned in the yard and outside the servants' quarters; the servants huddled in their own corners, partly because of the bad weather and partly because they guessed that something had gone wrong with their master. Yevpraxeya had finally come to her senses and thought no more of sweethearts and silk dresses; she sat for hours in the maids' room, not knowing what to do or to decide. Prokhor taunted her by saying that she and her potions were the cause of the master's undoing and she'd be sure to be sent for a walk down the Vladimirk* for it.

Judas meanwhile sat shut up in his study, lost in dreams. He liked it all the better that the weather had turned colder; the rain ceaselessly pattering on his windows made him drowsy, and his imagination had all the more scope and freedom. He fancied that he was invisible, and in that guise was making an inspection of his possessions accompanied by old Ilya, who had been bailiff in his Papa's, Vladimir Mikhailich's, time, and had been dead and buried years ago.

"A sensible chap, that Ilya! A servant of the old school! Such men are rare nowadays. The people today are ready enough with their tongues, but when it comes to work, there's no one to be had!" Porphiry Vladimirich reasoned with himself, very pleased that Ilya had risen from the dead.

Without haste or bustle, unseen by anyone, they leisurely made their way over fields and ravines, across meadows and dales to the Ukhovshchina bit of wasteland—and could not believe their eyes. A huge forest rose before them like a wall, with the tree-tops murmuring overhead. They were splendid trees, pines that two or

* *Vladimirka*—a road across the Vladimir Province, along which convicts were marched in the old days to hard-labour camps in Siberia.—*Ed.*

even three men could not clasp round; the trunks were straight and bare and the tops huge and bushy—that meant the forest had still a long life before it!

“Now that’s what I call a forest!” Judas exclaimed in delight.

“It’s been preserved,” old Ilya explained, “it had been blessed with icons in your grandfather’s, Mikhail Vasilyevich’s, time—and see how it’s grown!”

“How many acres will it be, do you think?”

“At that time it measured just two hundred and ten, but now . . . the acre in those days meant about an acre and a half at the present reckoning.”

“And how many trees do you think there are to an acre?”

“God only knows! He alone counted them.”

“And I think there is sure to be about two hundred or more to an acre. Not by the old reckoning either but by the present. Wait a minute. If it’s two hundred . . . or, say, two hundred and twenty to an acre—how many will it be on three hundred and fifteen acres?”

Porphiry Vladimirich took a piece of paper and multiplied 220 by 315; it proved to be 69,300 trees.

“If now we were to sell all this forest . . . piecemeal . . . do you think each tree would fetch ten rubles?”

Old Ilya shook his head.

“That’s not enough!” he said. “Just see what trees they are! Each tree would make two mill-shafts, and a good beam for any purpose, and two smaller ones, and then there are the branches. . . . What do you think a mill-shaft costs?”

Porphiry Vladimirich pretended not to know, though in truth he had calculated it all down to the last farthing long ago.

“In these parts a shaft alone is worth ten rubles, and in Moscow it would be simply priceless. Think what a shaft that would make! Three horses could only just draw it. And then another smaller shaft and a beam, and another beam, and logs and twigs. . . . A tree would fetch twenty rubles at the lowest.”

Porphiry Vladimirich could go on listening to Ilya for ever. Ilya was a sensible, a loyal man! And indeed he

was very lucky with his servants altogether. Ilya's assistant was old Vavilo (he too had long been dead and buried)—he was a staunch one! His accountant was Filka, whom Mamma had brought from the Vologda estate some sixty years ago; the foresters were experienced, trusty men; the dogs by the granaries were fierce. Both the men and the dogs were ready to seize the devil himself by the throat in defending their master's property!

"Now, let us see, what will it come to if we sell the whole forest piecemeal?"

Porphiry Vladimirich started calculating again the price of the mill-shaft, of the smaller shaft, of the beam, of the smaller beam, of the logs and twigs. He added the figures together and multiplied them, leaving out the fractions in one place and adding them in another. The sheet of paper was covered with figures.

"Look, old man, see what it comes to!" Judas showed the imaginary Ilya such a fantastic figure that even Ilya, who was by no means averse to increasing his master's property, seemed to cower.

"Isn't it a bit too much?" he said hesitatingly, shuffling his feet.

But Porphiry Vladimirich had thrown away all doubts and was chuckling gaily.

"You queer fellow! That's not my fancy, it's what the figures say. . . . There's a science, brother, called arithmetic . . . you may be sure it won't deceive you! Well, so much for this forest here; let's go to the Foxes' Pits now. I haven't been there for ages. I have an idea that the men are up to mischief there, I very much fear they are! And Garanka the watchman . . . I know, I know! He is a good man, trusty and hard-working—there's no gainsaying that! And yet . . . he seems to have got a bit slack lately."

Unseen and unheard they made their way through the thicket of birches, and suddenly stopped with bated breath. A peasant's cart lay upturned on the road, and its owner stood by, looking ruefully at the broken axle. After a while he swore at the axle and at himself, and gave his horse a cut with the whip ("Oh, you old crow!");

but something had to be done—he could not spend the night there! The thievish peasant looked round and listened if anyone was coming; then he selected a young birch-tree and pulled out his axe. . . . Judas stood by, not stirring a limb. The birch-tree shuddered, swayed, and suddenly fell on the ground. The peasant was just going to cut off the thick end, a piece big enough for the axle, when Judas decided that the moment for action had come. He stole up to the peasant and instantly snatched the axe out of his hands. . . .

“Ouch!” cried the thief caught unawares.

“Ouch!” Porphiry Vladimirich mimicked him. “And is it allowed to steal other people’s wood? Ouch, indeed! And was it your own birch you’ve just cut down?”

“Forgive me, sir!”

“I’ve forgiven everyone long ago, my man! I am a sinner myself and dare not condemn others. It’s not I but the law condemns you. Take the birch you’ve cut down for the axle to Golovlyovo, and you may as well bring a ruble’s fine with you; and meanwhile I’ll keep your axe! Don’t be afraid, I’ll take care of it!”

Pleased to have proved to Ilya how right he was about Garanka, Porphiry Vladimirich went in his mind from the spot of the crime to the forester’s hut and reprimanded him as befitted the occasion. Then he went home, and on the way caught in his oats three chickens belonging to the peasants. Returning to his study he set to work again, and suddenly an entirely novel economic system came into his mind. He thought of all that grew on his land, whether it was sown by him or just grew there, in terms of piecemeal prices plus fines that could be collected on it. Everyone suddenly took to wood-stealing and damaging his fields, but instead of being grieved by it Judas actually rubbed his hands with pleasure.

“Do as much damage as you like, my dears, it’s all the better for me!” he repeated, perfectly satisfied.

And he immediately took up a new sheet of paper and began reckoning and calculating: how much oats could be grown on an acre, and how much would it fetch if the peasants’ chickens trampled it down and he received damages for it all?

"And though the oats were trampled down the crop recovered after the rain, thank heaven!" Judas added mentally.

How many birches grew in Foxes' Pits, and how much would they fetch in fines if the peasants cut them down and paid damages for all they had tried to steal?

"And the birches that have been cut down will serve me as firewood, so I won't have to spend anything on hiring people to cut them down," Judas added in his mind again.

The paper was covered with huge columns of figures—rubles, tens, hundreds, thousands of rubles. Judas was so exhausted by his work and so excited by it that he got up from the table bathed in perspiration and lay down on the sofa to rest. But his turbulent imagination refused to desist and merely selected another and an easier subject.

"Mamma was a clever woman indeed," Porphiry Vladimirovich rambled on. "She was exacting but she knew how to be kind also, and that's why people liked working for her. But she too had her weaknesses! The good old soul has many sins on her conscience!"

No sooner had Judas mentioned Arina Petrovna than she materialised before him; her heart must have told her that she had to stand to answer and she came from her grave to her dear son.

"I don't know, dear, I really don't know what fault you could find with me," she said rather despondently. "I believe, I . . ."

"Tut-tut-tut, my dear! Don't you pretend!" Judas pulled her up unceremoniously. "If it's come to that, I'll put it all plainly to you! Why, for instance, didn't you stop Auntie Varvara Mikhailovna at that time?"

"But how could I? She was of age and could do what she pleased with herself!"

"Oh no, allow me! What sort of husband had she? Old and drunken . . . the very useless sort, that is! And yet she had four children. . . . How did she come by them, I ask you?"

"How strangely you talk, my dear! As though I were the cause of it!"

"Cause or no cause, you might have influenced her! Had you tried joking with her and being nice to her, she might have thought better of it—but you were always against her! Always riding the high horse. It was nothing but 'that horrid woman', and that 'shameless Var-ka'! You made out all the neighbours were her lovers! And so naturally . . . it put her back up. Pity! Goryushkino would have been ours now!"

"You are always carrying on about Goryushkino," said Arina Petrovna, evidently nonplussed by her son's accusations.

"Oh, I don't care about Goryushkino! I don't want anything for myself, really. If I have enough to buy a votive candle and a drop of lamp oil, I am content. But speaking generally, and in all fairness. . . . Yes, Mamma, I'd rather not speak but I can't help saying it's a sin on your conscience, a great sin!"

Arina Petrovna said nothing and merely made a gesture which could express either distress or perplexity.

"Or take another thing," Judas went on, enjoying his mother's discomfiture. "Why did you buy that house in Moscow for my brother Stepan?"

"I had to, my dear! He, too, had a right to a cut," said Arina Petrovna, justifying herself.

"And he went and squandered it! As though you didn't know him: he was rowdy, disrespectful, and foul-tongued—and yet you did it! And you wanted to give him Papa's Vologda estate too! A lovely little village! All in one piece, with a nice little wood and a lake, no neighbours, no other people's land intervening . . . all trim and neat, like a shelled egg, bless it! Good thing I happened to be about and stopped you. . . . Ah, Mamma, aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

"But after all he was my son. . . . Don't you understand? My son!"

"I know and I understand very well! But still you shouldn't have done it. No, you shouldn't. The house cost twelve thousand silver rubles—and where are they now? That's twelve thousand gone, and Auntie Varvara Mikhailovna's Goryushkino must be worth fifteen thousand at the very least. . . . So it comes to a lot altogether."

"Come, come, that will do. Don't be cross, for heaven's sake!"

"I am not cross, Mamma, I am only considering the justice of it. . . . What is true is true—I can't bear lies! Truthful I was born, truthful I have lived, and truthful I will die! God loves truth and tells us to love it too. Or take Pogorelka now—I will always say you wasted a lot of money on improving it."

"But I lived there myself."

Judas clearly read in his mother's face the words, "You ridiculous blood-sucker!" but pretended not to see.

"Never mind that you lived there, it was a waste all the same. . . . The icon-stand is at Pogorelka to this day, and whose is it? And that little horse too; and the tea-caddy. . . . I saw it with my own eyes at Golovlyovo while Papa was still living. And a very pretty caddy it is!"

"Why, it's a mere trifle!"

"No, Mamma, don't say that! One doesn't see it at once, of course, but when it's a ruble here, and fifty kopeks there, and twenty-five there. . . . If one looks at it and considers. . . . Allow me, though, I'll work it all out in figures. There's nothing better than figures—they never lie."

Porphyry Vladimirich rushed to his desk once more in order to make quite clear at last what losses his darling Mamma had brought upon him. He rattled the abacus counters, wrote down columns of figures—in short, made ready to convict Arina Petrovna of her misdeeds. Fortunately for her, his wandering mind could not dwell on any subject for long. A new object of gain unnoticeably stole into his mind and, as though by magic, gave quite a new turn to his thoughts. Arina Petrovna, whom he had seen so vividly only a minute before, suddenly dropped into the well of forgetfulness. The figures grew muddled.

Porphyry Vladimirich had long been meaning to calculate how much he could make by farming his land, and now was just the moment for it. He knew that the peasants were always in need, always wanting to borrow, and always paying their debts with interest. The peasants are particularly generous with their labour, which "costs

nothing", and in settling their accounts it is just thrown in, for love. There are many needy people in Russia. Oh, how many! Many do not know today what awaits them tomorrow. Many look round despondently and see nothing but a hopeless void, hear nothing but the words "pay back", "pay back". It is those despairing people, those poor starvelings that Judas entangled in his web, going off sometimes into the wildest flights of fancy.

It was April and the peasants as usual had no corn left. "They've eaten all they had, idling all the winter, and so in the spring they have to tighten their belts!" Judas reflected. As it happened, he had just put his accounts of last year's farming into perfect order. In February the last stacks of corn had been threshed, in March the grain was stored away, and the other day he put it all down in the appropriate columns of his account-books. Judas was standing at the window waiting. In the distance, the peasant Foka appeared on the bridge in his old cart. At the cross-roads to Golovlyovo he hurriedly jerked at the reins, and for lack of whip, brandished his arm at the horse, that could scarcely move its legs.

"He's coming here!" Judas whispered. "The state his horse is in! Why, it's barely alive! But if it were fed properly for a month or two it wouldn't be a bad beast. It could fetch a good twenty-five rubles, perhaps thirty."

Meanwhile Foka had driven up to the servants' cottage, tied his horse to the fence, gave it a bit of hay, and a minute later was shifting from one foot to the other in the maids' room, where Porphiry Vladimirich generally received petitioners.

"Well, my friend, what have you to tell me?"

"Perhaps you could spare some rye, sir."

"How so? So you've eaten all you had? Dear me, what a shame! Now if you drank less vodka and worked more, and gave more time to prayer, the land would respond to that, you know! Where you now gather one grain you would gather two or three—and you wouldn't have to borrow!"

Foka smiled irresolutely by way of an answer.

"You imagine God is far off and so He doesn't see?" Porphiry Vladimirich went on moralising. "Oh no, God

is near enough. Here and there and everywhere—with us now while we are talking. And He sees and hears everything, he only makes it appear as though He didn't. Let men live by their own devices, He thinks, we'll see if they'll remember Me! And we take advantage of this, and instead of sparing some of our earnings for a votive candle we take it all to the pot-house! And that's why God doesn't give us a good harvest. Isn't that so, friend?"

"There's no gainsaying that. That's true enough!"

"There, you see, now you have understood it too. And why have you understood it? Because God has averted His merciful gaze from you. If you had had a good harvest, you would be giving yourself airs again! But now that God. . . ."

"That's right. If now we. . . ."

"Wait, let me have my say! God always sends a reminder, my man, to those who forget Him. And we mustn't murmur against Him because of it but must understand that it's done for our own good. Had we remembered God, He wouldn't have forgotten us either. He would have given us everything: lovely rye, and fine oats, and delicious potatoes—there, have as much as you like! And He would have looked after your animals too—and now, see, your horse is almost at its last gasp! And He would have given a good start to your poultry, if you have any!"

"You are right there, Porphyry Vladimich."

"To honour God—that's the first thing, and then to honour your betters, who have received distinction from the tsars . . . the landed gentry, for instance. . . ."

"But, Porphyry Vladimich, I believe we. . . ."

"You 'believe', but if you think about it you'll find it's not so. Now that you've come to ask me for some rye, there's no denying you are very nice and respectful: but the year before last, you remember, when I wanted hands for the harvest and had to ask a favour from you peasants, saying, 'Please help me, brothers', what did you answer? 'We have our own harvest to see to,' you said. 'We needn't work for the gentry like in the old days, now we are free,' you said. Free you are, but you have no rye!"

Porphiry Vladimirich looked admonishingly at Foka, but the latter seemed frozen into immobility.

"You are too proud, that's why you have no luck! Take me, for instance. One would have thought God has given me grace and the tsar his favour, and yet I am not proud. How could I be? What am I? A worm! A midge! Nothing! And here God has blessed me for my humility. He's bestowed grace upon me Himself, and inspired the tsar to show me favour!"

"I reckon we had a far better time in the old days, Porphiry Vladimirich, when we had masters,"* said Foka to flatter him.

"Yes, my man, you have had your day. You had a fine and jolly time of it. You had everything—rye, and hay, and potatoes! Well, it's no use remembering old scores, I am not one to harbour resentment. I had forgotten all about those harvest hands, my man, and merely recalled it by the way. What did you say you wanted, rye, was it?"

"Yes, please, sir."

"You mean you want to buy some?"

"No chance of that! Perhaps you would lend me some till the new harvest."

"Oh dear, oh dear! Rye is worth a good deal nowadays. I don't know what I'd better do about it. . . ."

Porphiry Vladimirich sank into thought for a moment, as though really not knowing what to do. "I should like to help the man, but rye is very dear. . . ."

"Very well, my friend, I can lend you some rye," he said at last, "and, to tell you the truth, I haven't any for sale. I can't bear to trade in God's gifts. But to lend it—that's another matter, that I shall do with pleasure. I never forget, you know, that today you borrow from me, the next day I may have to borrow from you. Today I have plenty—take it, borrow as much as you like. If you want six bushels—take six. If you want three—help yourself to three. And tomorrow it may come to pass that

* The peasants had to redeem their pitiful allotments with a sum of money that far exceeded the cost of the land. Moreover, in most cases they were done out of meadowlands and woods when the land was divided up, and were once again dependent on their former masters.—*Ed.*

I'll have to knock at your window and say, 'Lend me a little rye, Foka, I have nothing to eat.' "

"Is it likely you would, sir?"

"Well, not really, but I give it as an instance. . . . Stranger changes than that happen in the world, my man! Here they write in the papers that Napoleon, high and mighty as he was, has come to grief—not good enough, it appears. So that's that, brother. How much rye do you want?"

"Six bushels, if you are so kind."

"Very well, let it be six bushels. Only I warn you, rye is very dear nowadays, my man, frightfully dear! So I'll tell you what we'll do: I'll give you four and a half bushels, and in eight months' time you bring me back six—that will be just right. I don't charge interest but take it back in kind, out of your plenty. . . ."

Judas's offer took Foka's breath away. He said nothing for a time and merely wriggled his shoulders.

"Isn't that too much, sir?" he brought out timidly at last.

"If it's too much—ask someone else! I'm not forcing it on you, my friend, I'm offering it you in all kindness. I didn't send for you, you came to me yourself. You ask me a question and I give you an answer. So that's how it is, my friend."

"That is so, but it seems a great deal to pay back."

"Oh me, oh my! And I thought you were a steady, fair-minded man! And what do you expect me to live on? How am I to provide for my expenses? Do you know what my expenses are? There is simply no end to them. I have to give to that one, and to satisfy another, and to produce something for a third. Everyone needs something, everyone worries Porphiry Vladimirich, and Porphiry Vladimirich has to answer for all! Then there's another thing: had I sold my rye to a corn-dealer I should have had the money there and then. There's nothing like money, old chap. With the money I can buy securities, keep them in a safe place and receive the interest! No fuss, no worry: I cut off the coupon and present it to be paid. But if I have rye I have to look after it, and take no end of trouble. The amount that is lost

through drying, and being spilt, and eaten by mice! No, my man, money is very much better. I ought to have done the sensible thing long ago, converted all I had into money and left you."

"No, you stay with us, Porphiry Vladimirich!"

"I should like to, my dear, but it's too much for me. If I had my former strength, of course I should stay and put up a good fight. But no, it's time, high time I had a rest. I'll go to St. Sergius's and take shelter under the saint's wing, and there will be no sight or sound of me. And I will be so happy there: it's peaceful, quiet, decorous—no noise, no quarrels, and no shouting—like heaven!"

In short, in spite of all Foka's efforts, the matter was settled as Porphiry Vladimirich wished. But that was not all. When Foka had already agreed to his terms, Porphiry Vladimirich suddenly thought of a piece of waste ground he had, some three acres of meadowland, or perhaps less. . . . It would be a good thing if. . . .

"I am doing you a favour, and you do me a favour too!" he said. "That's not by way of interest but just as a favour. God helps us all, and we help each other. It will be nothing to you to mow those three acres, and I'll remember it in the future. I am a simple-hearted man, you know. You'll do a ruble's worth of work for me, and I. . . ."

Porphiry Vladimirich stood up and crossed himself looking at the church, to show that the affair was settled. Following his example Foka crossed himself too.

Foka disappeared. Porphiry Vladimirich took up a piece of paper, armed himself with the abacus, and the counters started rattling and clicking under his nimble fingers. . . . It was a regular orgy of figures. A mist seemed to envelop the world before Judas's eyes. With feverish haste he passed from the counters to the paper and back from the paper to the counters. The figures grew and grew. . . .

THE RECKONING

It was the middle of December; the countryside, wrapped as far as the eye could see in a shroud of snow, seemed spell-bound. During the night such snow-drifts had formed in the road that the peasants' horses struggled hard, dragging empty sledges out of them. There was hardly a track leading to Golovlyovo. Porphiry Vladimrich had got so out of the habit of receiving visitors that when autumn came he had the main gate and the front door nailed up, letting his household communicate with the outside world by means of the servants' entrance and the side gate.

It was eleven in the morning. Judas stood by the window in his dressing-gown looking vacantly before him. He had been walking up and down his study since early morning, thinking of this, that and the other and reckoning up imaginary sources of income till at last he grew muddled and tired of figures. The orchard in front of the house and the village hidden away behind it were buried in snow. After the snow-storm of the day before, the weather was bright and frosty and the snow glittered in the sun with millions of sparks so that Porphiry Vladimrich had to screw up his eyes. The courtyard was deserted and still; no one was stirring near the servants' hall or the cattle shed, and even the village was so quiet that it might have been dead. The lone bluish spiral of smoke rising over the priest's house attracted Judas's attention.

"It has struck eleven and the priest's wife hasn't finished cooking yet!" he thought. "Those priests do nothing but stuff themselves!"

Taking this for his starting-point, he went on to consider whether it was a week-day, a holiday, or a fast, and what the priest's wife could be cooking—when his

attention was suddenly distracted. A black speck appeared on the top of the hill, just outside the Naglovka village, and it gradually grew nearer and bigger; watching it Porphiry Vladimirich began of course to ask himself a number of idle questions. Who was it coming, a peasant or somebody else? But it could not be anyone else, so it must be a peasant . . . yes, so it was! What was he coming for? If it was for firewood, the Naglovka wood lay on the other side of the village . . . the rascal was probably out to steal some wood belonging to Golovlyovo! Now if he were going to the mill, he should have turned to the right. . . . Perhaps he was coming for the priest. Someone might be dying or had died already. . . . Or perhaps a child was born. Which woman could be having a baby? Nenila was in the family way, but one would have thought it was too soon for her. . . . If the child was a boy he would be included in the census presently—let's see how many souls were there in Naglovka by the last census. But if it was a girl she wouldn't be registered, and altogether. . . . And yet one cannot do without the fair sex . . . God have mercy on us, sinners.

Judas spat and looked at the icon as though seeking its protection against evil.

His thoughts would probably have gone on wandering in that way for a long time had the black dot that came into sight by Naglovka flitted past and disappeared as usual, but it grew and grew and at last turned towards the dam leading to the church. Then Judas clearly saw that it was a small covered sledge drawn by a pair of horses. It climbed up the hill, came up to the church ("Can it be the Father Superior?" flashed through his mind; "that's why they haven't finished cooking at the priest's to this hour!"), turned to the right and came straight towards his house. "That's right, it's coming here!" Porphiry Vladimirich instinctively drew his dressing-gown round him and shrank back from the window as though afraid that the visitor might catch sight of him.

He was right: the sledge drove up to the house and stopped at the side gate. A young woman quickly jumped out of it. She was dressed in a town coat trimmed with astrakhan, fashionable rather than warm, and was evi-



dently stiff with cold. Nobody came out to meet her; she skipped up the side-door steps and a few seconds later the maids' room door banged, then another door, and there were sounds of banging, footsteps, and general commotion in all the adjoining rooms.

Porphiry Vladimirich stood at the door of his study listening. It was so long since he had seen any strangers or been in company at all that he was quite alarmed. A quarter of an hour passed; the banging and walking about still went on, but no one came to tell him who had arrived. This unnerved him all the more. The visitor obviously belonged to the family and as such entertained no doubts as to her right to his hospitality; but what relatives had he? He tried to remember, but his memory seemed to have blunted. He once had a son Volodenka and a son Petenka, and he had a mother, Arina Petrovna . . . but that was long, long ago! Last autumn Nadya Galkina, the daughter of his late aunt Varvara Mikhailovna, had settled at Goryushkino—could it be her? But no! She did try once to force an entrance into Golovlyovo, but had to beat an ignominious retreat. "She daren't! She won't dare!" Judas repeated to himself, flaring up with indignation at the very thought that it could be Nadya Galkina. But who else could it be?

While he was thus reflecting, Yevpraxeya cautiously came to the door and announced:

"The Pogorelka young lady, Anna Semyonovna, has come."

It really was Anninka. But she was so changed that it was almost impossible to recognise her. She was no longer the handsome, lively girl, brimming over with youthful vitality, with rosy cheeks, protuberant grey eyes, high bosom and a heavy blonde plait, who came to Golovlyovo shortly after Arina Petrovna's death. This was a feeble, broken creature, with a flat chest, sunken cheeks, a hectic colour, and languid movements; her shoulders drooped, she was almost stooping. Even her splendid hair somehow seemed lustreless, and only her eyes, which looked larger than ever on her thin face, burned with a feverish light. Yevpraxeya gazed at her for some time as at a stranger but recognised her at last.

"Is it really you, Miss?" she cried, clasping her hands.

"Yes, why?"

Saying this, Anninka laughed softly, as though she would add, "Yes, that's how it is! I've gone to the dogs all right."

"Is Uncle well?" she asked.

"He is and he isn't. . . . He is alive, that's all one can say, but we hardly ever see him."

"What's the matter with him?"

"I don't know. . . . I expect he's got that way from being bored."

"Do you mean to say he doesn't talk by the hour any more?"

"No, Miss, he doesn't say a word nowadays. He used to talk so, and all of a sudden he stopped. We sometimes hear him talk to himself in the study, and he even seems to laugh, too, but he doesn't speak when he comes out. They say it was the same with his brother Stepan Vladimirovich. . . . He seemed jolly and well—and suddenly he ceased to speak. But what about you, Miss—how are you?"

Anninka made a gesture of despair.

"And how is your sister?"

"She has been lying buried by the roadside at Krechetov a whole month now."

"God have mercy on us! How do you mean, by the roadside?"

"The usual way they bury suicides."

"Good heavens! A young lady laying hands on herself! How was that?"

"Well, first she was 'a young lady', and then she poisoned herself—that's all! And my courage failed me, I wanted to live, and here I have come to you! Not for long, don't worry. . . . I shall soon be dead."

Yevpraxeya stared hard at her, as though not taking it in.

"Why do you stare at me? A pretty sight, am I not? Well, that's how I am. . . . But we'll talk of that presently . . . not now. . . . Please tell them to pay off the coachman and warn my uncle."

Saying this she pulled an old purse out of her pocket and took out two yellow notes.

"And here are my belongings!" she added, pointing to a small suitcase. "All my property is here—both hereditary and acquired! I feel cold, Yevpraxeya, I'm frozen! I am ill through and through, I haven't a sound bone in my body, and here's this awful weather into the bargain. As I drove along I only thought of one thing: if I get to Golovlyovo, at any rate I'll die in a warm bed! I should like some vodka. . . . Have you any?"

"Hadn't you better have some tea, Miss? The samovar will be ready in a minute."

"No, I'll have tea later. I'd like some vodka first. Don't tell my uncle about the vodka, though. . . . He will see for himself presently."

While the table was being laid for tea, Porphyry Vladimirich came into the dining-room. It was Anninka's turn to be surprised—he had grown so thin, faded, and queer. He greeted Anninka rather peculiarly: not coldly really but with a curious unconcern. He spoke little and with effort, like an actor trying to recall bits out of the parts he used to play. Altogether he was absent-minded, as though he had been working out something very important in his mind and had been, most annoyingly, called away for a trivial matter.

"Well, here you are!" he said. "What will you have? Tea? Coffee? Order what you like."

In the old days it was Judas who generally acted the emotional part at family meetings, but this time it was Anninka who gave way to feeling and quite genuinely, too. Her heart must have been very sore, for she threw her arms around Porphyry Vladimirich's neck and hugged him.

"Uncle, I have come to you!" she cried, suddenly bursting into tears.

"Well, you are welcome! There's plenty of room. You can live here."

"I am ill, Uncle dear! I am very, very ill!"

"And if you are ill, you must pray! When I am ill, I always cure myself by prayer."

"I have come to you to die, Uncle!"

Porphyry Vladimirich looked at her critically and a hardly perceptible sneer twitched his lips.

"Played your last, have you?"

"Yes, I have. Lubinka played her last and died and I . . . am still alive, you see!"

On hearing about Lubinka's death, Judas crossed himself devoutly and murmured a prayer. Anninka meanwhile sat down at the table, leaned her elbows on it and, looking in the direction of the church, wept bitterly.

"Now, weeping and despairing is a sin!" Porphiry Vladimirich remarked admonishingly. "Do you know what a Christian's duty is? Not to weep, but to submit and trust in God—that's what a Christian should do!"

But Anninka threw herself back in her chair and repeated, her arms drooping despondently:

"Oh, I don't know! I don't know! I don't know!"

"If you are grieving so about your sister, that too is a sin!" Judas went on preaching. "For although it is praiseworthy to love one's brothers and sisters, yet if it pleases God to call one or even several of them to Himself. . . ."

"Oh, no, no! Uncle, are you good? Are you? Tell me!"

Anninka rushed to him again and put her arms round him.

"Yes, yes, I am! Now, is there anything you would like? Something to eat, some tea or coffee? Ask, tell them to bring it you!"

Anninka suddenly recalled how on her first visit to Golovlyovo her uncle had asked her, "Would you like to have some veal? A suckling-pig? Some potatoes?"—and she understood that she would find no other comfort here.

"Thank you, Uncle," she said, sitting down to the table again. "I don't want anything special. I am sure I shall be quite satisfied with everything."

"Well, if you will be satisfied, so much the better. Will you be going to Pogorelka?"

"No, Uncle, I'll stay with you for the present. You don't mind, do you?"

"Of course not, bless you! I only asked about Pogorelka because if you are thinking of going there I must give orders about the sledge and horses."

"No, later on, not now!"

"Well, that's fine. You can go there some time later, and now stay with us. You can help with the housekeeping—I am alone, you know! That beauty"—Judas pointed almost with hatred to Yevpraxeya, who was pouring out tea—"goes traipsing about the servants' quarters most of the day, so at times I can't make anyone hear. The whole house is deserted! Well, I'll leave you now. I'll go to my room. I'll say my prayers and see to my work, and pray again. . . . So that's how it is, my dear! How long is it since Lubinka died?"

"About a month, Uncle!"

"Then we'll go to early Mass tomorrow and have a requiem sung for her. . . . Well, good-bye for the present! Drink your tea, and if you are hungry after your journey, tell them to bring you something. I shall see you at dinner again. We'll have a talk, and if there's anything to see to, we'll see to it, and if not—we'll just sit quietly!"

Such was their first meeting. When it was over Anninka entered a new phase of life—life at that very same Golovlyovo that she had hated so much and had twice been so anxious to escape from in the course of her short life.

Anninka had gone downhill very quickly. Her visit to Golovlyovo after her grandmother's death had made her aware that she was a "young lady" with a home and family graves of her own, that her life was not confined to the stench and din of hotels and inns, that she had a refuge where the vile breaths reeking of vodka and the stables could not reach her, and where she was safe from that man with a big moustache, inflamed eyes, and a voice hoarse with drink. (Oh, the things he had said to her! The gestures he had made in her presence!) But that awareness had disappeared almost as soon as she lost sight of Golovlyovo.

Anninka had then gone straight to Moscow to try and get herself and Lubinka taken on at one of the state theatres. With this object in view she went to see, among other people, the head mistress of her boarding-school, and some of her school friends. They all received her

rather strangely. The head mistress, who was quite gracious at first, grew cold and forbidding as soon as she heard that Anninka was a provincial actress; and her friends, married women most of them, looked at her with such impudent surprise that she simply lost her nerve. Only one of them, more kind-hearted than the others, asked her by way of being sympathetic:

"Tell me, dear, is it true that when you actresses dress for the stage, officers lace up your corsets for you?"

In short, all her attempts to establish herself in Moscow came to nothing. It is only fair to say, however, that she was not really good enough for the Moscow stage. Both she and Lubinka were of the type of those lively but not very talented actresses who play one and the same part all their lives. Anninka was good in *Perichole* and Lubinka in *Pansies* and the *Old-Fashioned Colonel*. Whatever else they attempted, it seemed always like *Perichole* and *Pansies* all over again, and very often, indeed, like nothing at all. In the course of her duties Anninka often had to act *la belle Hélène*; she put a fiery-red wig over her ash-blond hair, slit her tunic open right up to the waist, but for all that, her performance was dull, mediocre, and not even naughty. From *Hélène* she passed to the *Grand Duchess of Herolstein*, but her colourless acting, combined with the absurd production, made the whole performance downright silly. At last she attempted Clairette in *La Fille de Madame Angot*, and in trying to warm up the audience overacted to such an extent that even the uncritical provincial public was sickened by the obscenity of the spectacle. Generally speaking Anninka had the reputation of a lively actress with quite a good voice, and as she was good-looking into the bargain, she could be fairly certain of a full house in the provinces. But that was all. She could not make a name for herself and there was nothing individual about her acting. Even in the provinces her admirers were chiefly men belonging to the army, whose main ambition was to have free access backstage. She could have only been tolerated on the Moscow stage if she had had very strong backing, and even then she would

certainly have received from the public the unflattering title of a "cheap piece".

And so she had to return to the provinces. In Moscow she received a letter from Lubinka saying that their company had moved to Samovarnov, of which Lubinka was very glad, for she had made friends with a member of the local Rural Council*. He was so infatuated with her that he seemed "ready to steal public money" to satisfy all her whims. And indeed, arriving in Samovarnov, Anninka found that her sister was living in comparative luxury and had recklessly resolved to give up the stage. When Anninka walked into her sister's flat she found Lubinka's "friend", Gavriilo Stepanich Lyulkin, with her. He was a retired captain of the hussars, once a handsome man but now distinctly heavy. He had noble features, noble manners, and a noble way of thinking, and yet all of it taken together made one feel confident that that man was not likely to be squeamish about the Rural Council funds. Lubinka received her sister with open arms and said that she had a room ready for her at her flat.

But Anninka, still under the influence of her recent visit to "her own place", grew angry. The sisters had a heated argument which ended in a quarrel; and Anninka could not help recalling how the Pogorelka priest had said that it was difficult for an actress to preserve her "treasure".

Anninka settled at an hotel and broke off all relations with her sister. Easter came. The following week theatres reopened and Anninka learned that a Miss Nalimova from Kazan had been engaged in her sister's place—a poor actress but one with no compunctions as to the decency of her motions. Anninka appeared in *Perichole* as usual and delighted the Samovarnov audience. Returning to her hotel she found in her room an envelope containing a hundred rubles and a short note saying, "And as much afterwards if. . . . Fancy-drapeer Kukishev."

* Rural Councils were set up after the abolition of serfdom. Shchedrin had a poor opinion of these bodies and their functionaries.—Ed.

Anninka got angry and complained to the hotel-keeper, who explained that it was Kukishev's habit to thus welcome all actresses on their arrival, but that he was a harmless man and there was no need to take offence. Following his advice Anninka put the money and the note into an envelope and, returning it to the sender the following day, troubled no more about it.

But Kukishev proved to be more persistent than the hotel-keeper had described him. He considered himself to be one of Lyulkin's friends and was on good terms with Lubinka. He was a man of means and, moreover, as a member of the Municipal Council was, like Lyulkin, most favourably placed with regard to the municipal funds. Also, like Lyulkin, he had no scruples in this respect. His appearance was most attractive by standards accepted in his circle; he reminded one of that beetle which, in the words of the song, Masha found in the meadow instead of wild strawberries:

*That's the beetle I found there:
Black moustache and curly hair,
Eyebrows black and debonair,
A perfect darling, I declare.*

Endowed with such looks and a promise of Lubinka's assistance he considered that he had every right to presume.

Altogether Lubinka had evidently burnt her boats, and the rumours about her were by no means gratifying to her sister's pride. It was said that every evening a merry-making crowd gathered in her flat and sat at supper from midnight till morning; that Lubinka, acting a "Gypsy singer", presided over these parties half-clad, while Lyulkin exclaimed, addressing his drunken friends, "There's a bosom for you!" and that she sang, with her hair down and a guitar in her hands:

*Oh, the dear with the moustache,
What delight I've had with him!*

Anninka listened to these stories with anxiety. What surprised her most was that Lubinka should be singing

in the Gypsy style, just like the Moscow Matryosha! Anninka always did justice to her sister, and had she been told, for instance, that Lubinka sang "inimitably" the couplets out of the *Old-Fashioned Colonel*, she would have thought this perfectly natural and believed it readily. There was no disbelieving it in fact because the Kursk and the Tambov and the Penza audiences still remembered with what inimitable naïveté Lubinka declared in her sweet little voice that she would like to serve under a Colonel.... But that Lubinka could sing in the Gypsy style, like Matryosha—oh no! That was a lie! Now she, Anninka, *could* sing like that, there was no doubt about it. It was her *genre*, her line, and the whole of Kursk that had seen her in the *Impersonations of Russian Songs* would say she *could*.

Thereupon Anninka took a guitar, flung a striped scarf over her shoulder, sat down crossing her legs, and began her "Oh's!" and "Ah's!". And she really did it exactly like the Gypsy Matryosha.

But however that might be Lubinka was living in luxury, and Lyulkin, anxious not to dim their drunken bliss by any refusals, had obviously begun helping himself to municipal money. To say nothing of the champagne drunk and spilt on the floor every night in Lubinka's flat, she herself grew more capricious and exacting every day. Dresses from Madame Minangoua in Moscow appeared on the scene, followed by diamonds from Foulde. Lubinka was practical and did not despise valuables. Drinking was one thing, and gold, precious stones and, above all, state lottery tickets another. In any case her life, if not really gay, was a perpetual round of reckless, rowdy festivities. The only unpleasant thing about it was that she had to go out of her way to please the Chief of Police, who, though a friend of Lyulkin, liked to assert his authority at times. Lubinka always knew when he was dissatisfied with her suppers, for in that case a Police Inspector called on her the following morning demanding her passport. She had to give in; in the morning she offered vodka and something nice to eat to the Inspector, and in the evening mixed for the Chief of Police with her own hands some special "Swedish" punch which he particularly liked.

Kukishev watched this unbridled revelry and burned with envy. He wanted at all costs to have an open house just like Lyulkin's and a "lady-love" exactly like his. They could then spend their time with greater variety too: one night at Lyulkin's "lady-love's" and another at his, Kukishev's. This was his cherished dream, the dream of a stupid man—and the more stupid a man is, the more obstinate in achieving his ends. And Anninka seemed to him the most suitable person for realising that dream.

Anninka would not give in, however. So far she had not known passion, though she had many admirers and was very free in her manners. There was a moment when she fancied she might fall in love with the local tragic actor Miloslavsky, who was obviously consumed with passion for her. But Miloslavsky was so stupid in addition to being constantly drunk that he never declared himself and did nothing but stare goggle-eyed at her and hiccup in an absurd kind of way when she went past him. So her love for him was nipped in the bud. As to her other admirers, Anninka regarded them merely as an inevitable part of the conditions in which a provincial actress was obliged to carry on her trade. She put up with those conditions, taking advantage of the small privileges they entitled her to (applause, bouquets, troika drives, picnics, etc.), but went no further than this, so to speak, outward dissoluteness.

She behaved in the same way now. During the whole summer she steadily trod in the path of virtue, jealously guarding her "treasure", as though wishing to prove to the Pogorelka priest that heroic characters could be found even among actresses. Once she actually decided to complain of Kukishev to the governor of the province, who heard her out graciously and praised her fortitude, advising her to keep it up. But as at the same time he saw in her complaint nothing but a pretext for an indirect attack upon his own person, he added that, having spent his energies in the struggle with internal enemies, he did not think he could be useful to her in the way she wished. Hearing this, Anninka blushed and went away.

Kukishev meanwhile went about his courting so cleverly that he succeeded in getting the general public interested in his suit. The public seemed to have suddenly come to the conclusion that Kukishev was right and that Miss Pogorelskaya 1st (that was Anninka's stage name) was not anybody very grand and had no business to act a *sainte nitouche*.

A whole party was formed with the object of teaching the rebellious upstart a lesson. It began with the habitués of the actresses' dressing-rooms ignoring her room and choosing her neighbour's room, Miss Nalimova's, for a haunt. Then, without displaying any definite hostility, they began receiving her when she appeared on the stage with such deadly coldness that one might think she was some wretched chorus girl and not the leading lady. At last they insisted on the manager taking away some of Anninka's parts and giving them to Miss Nalimova. The most curious thing of all was that Lubinka took a very active part in this underhand intrigue and had Miss Nalimova for her bosom friend.

At the end of August Anninka was surprised to find herself reduced to playing the part of Orestes in *La Belle Hélène* and that Perichole was the only one of her old leading parts still left her—and that solely because Miss Nalimova herself did not venture to compete with her in it. Besides, the manager informed her that in view of her diminished popularity her salary would be reduced to seventy-five rubles a month and one-half benefit performance a year.

Anninka grew frightened because with a salary such as this she would have to move from the hotel to an inn. She wrote to two or three theatrical managers offering her services, but they all replied that there were no end of Pericholes on the market already and besides, being difficult to deal with, as they had heard from trustworthy sources, she could not hope for any chance at all.

Anninka was coming to the end of her savings. Another week—and she would have had to move to the inn, no better than Miss Khoroshavina, who acted Parthenis and enjoyed the patronage of the police sergeant. She began to feel something like despair, all the more so be-

cause every day some mysterious hand left in her room a note with the words: "Perichole, submit! Your Kukishev." One day when she was feeling particularly depressed Lubinka suddenly burst in upon her.

"Do tell me, what prince are you saving your treasure for?" she asked point-blank.

Anninka was completely taken aback. The first thing that struck her was that the Pogorelka priest and Lubinka used the word "treasure" in exactly the same sense. The only difference was that the priest thought it all-important while Lubinka regarded it as a thing of no consequence, though it was capable of driving "those beastly men" frantic.

Then she could not help asking herself: what, after all, was this "treasure"? Was it really precious and worth preserving?—and, alas, found no satisfactory answer to that question. On the one hand it seemed rather a shame to be left without it, and on the other . . . hang it all, surely the whole meaning of life, all its merits, could not be reduced to a mere struggle for one's "treasure"?

"I have put by thirty lottery tickets in six months," Lubinka went on, "and any amount of clothes . . . see what a dress I have on!"

Lubinka turned round, pulled her dress straight in front and behind, and let Anninka examine her on all sides. The dress really was expensive and marvellously made: straight from Madame Minangoua in Moscow.

"Kukishev is kind," Lubinka began again. "He'll deck you out like a doll and give you money too. You can throw up the stage then. . . . You've had enough of it!"

"Never!" Anninka cried hotly; she had not yet forgotten the words "sacred art".

"You can stay on if you like. You'll have the highest salary again and play the leading parts instead of the Nalimova girl."

Anninka was silent.

"Well, good-bye. My friends are waiting for me downstairs. Kukishev is there too. Coming?"

Anninka was still silent.

"Well, think it over, if there's anything to think about. And when you've made up your mind, come. Good-bye."

On September 17th, which was Lubinka's birthday, the poster of the Samovarnov theatre announced a *special* performance. Anninka appeared again in the part of *la belle Hélène* and the part of Orestes was played "just this once" by Miss Pogorelskaya 2nd, that is, Lubinka. To crown the occasion Miss Nalimova, "also for this evening only", took the part of the smith, Cleon, dressed in tights and a short jacket, her face slightly blackened with soot, and a sheet of iron in her hands. In view of all this the audience was particularly enthusiastic. The moment Anninka appeared on the stage she was met with such a storm of applause that, having got out of the habit of hearing it, she felt sobs choking her. When, in Act Three, in the night scene, she got up from the couch almost naked, there was a regular groan in the house and one member of the audience was so electrified that he shouted at Menelaus as he appeared at the door, "Go away, you tiresome man!" Anninka understood that the audience had forgiven her. Kukishev, meanwhile, in evening dress, white tie and white gloves, made his triumph known in a dignified manner, and treated friends and strangers to champagne in the buffet during the intervals. Finally, the theatre manager appeared, jubilant, in Anninka's dressing-room and said, kneeling before her:

"Now you are a good girl, Miss! And so from tonight onwards you'll receive the same salary as before and have the old number of benefits!"

In short, everyone praised her, congratulated her, expressed their sympathy, so that she—afraid as she had been at first and so wretched that she did not know where to turn—suddenly became convinced that she had . . . fulfilled her mission in life!

After the performance they all went to celebrate Lubinka's birthday at her flat where congratulations and praise were redoubled. The crowd that gathered there was so large and the place so quickly filled with smoke that one could hardly breathe. They all sat down to supper at once, and champagne began to flow. Kukishev never left Anninka's side; she was evidently rather embarrassed, but no longer resented his attentions. She was slightly amused and also flattered at having so easily gained possession of

this big strong creature who could easily bend or unbend a horseshoe but was like wax in her hands, ready to do anything she wished. There was much merriment at supper—that drunken, rowdy merriment which does not appeal either to the heart or to the mind and results in headache and sickness next day. Only one of the company, the tragedian Miloslavsky, looked gloomy and, refusing champagne, swallowed glass after glass of plain vodka. Anninka refrained from drinking for a time, but Kukishev was so insistent and implored her so pitifully, kneeling before her, “Anna Semyonovna! You are in arrears! Please allow me to beg you! Drink to our bliss, our love and happiness! Do me the favour!”—that though his stupid face and silly words annoyed her she could not refuse, and very soon began to feel giddy. Lubinka was so generous that she actually asked Anninka to sing “Oh, the dear with the moustache”, and Anninka did it to such perfection that everyone cried, “Now, that’s the thing . . . just like Matryosha!” Lubinka for her part sang the couplets about serving under a Colonel so admirably as to convince everyone that this was her true *genre* in which she had no rivals, just as Anninka had none in the Gypsy songs. In conclusion Miloslavsky and Miss Nalimova acted a “masquerade” in which the tragedian recited verses from *Ugolino* (tragedy in five acts by N. Polevoi) and Miss Nalimova replied with bits from an unpublished play by Barukov. The result was so unexpected and funny that Miss Nalimova very nearly carried the day, almost eclipsing Misses Pogorelskaya.

It was almost light when Kukishev helped Anninka into a carriage. Pious townspeople coming back from early service looked at the tipsily swaying young woman in her gorgeous dress, and murmured grimly:

“Good people are returning from church while they are guzzling wine . . . damnation take them!”

Anninka went from her sister’s not to the hotel, but to her *own* flat, small but cosy and very nicely furnished.

Kukishev followed her in.

The winter passed in an unheard-of whirl of revelry. Anninka completely lost her head, and if she ever thought of the “treasure” it was only to say to herself, “What a

fool I was, really!" Kukishev, proud that his dream about having a "lady-love" as good as Lubinka had come true, spared no expense, and from the spirit of rivalry bought two dresses when Lyulkin bought one and ordered two dozen bottles of champagne when Lyulkin ordered one. Lubinka actually began to envy her sister because in the course of the winter Anninka put by forty state lottery tickets and a number of gold trinkets with and without stones. The sisters had again made friends, however, and decided to pool all their savings. Anninka still had dreams about the future and said to her sister in intimate conversation:

"When all *this* is over we'll go to Pogorelka. We shall have money and we'll start farming."

To which Lubinka very cynically replied:

"Do you imagine *this* will ever end . . . you fool!"

Unluckily for Anninka, Kukishev conceived a new idea which he began pursuing with his usual obstinacy. Being an uneducated and unquestionably stupid man, he fancied that he would attain the height of bliss if his "lady-love" could "accompany him", that is, learned to drink vodka with him.

"Let's toss off a glass together, Anna Semyonovna, shall we?" he pestered her continually. He always addressed Anninka rather formally, appreciating the fact that she was a born lady and wishing to prove that it was not for nothing he had served as an apprentice in a Moscow shop.

Anninka refused for a time, saying that Lyulkin never forced Lubinka to drink vodka with him.

"And yet she does out of affection for Mr. Lyulkin!" Kukishev replied. "And allow me to point out to you, my love, there's no need for us to copy the Lyulkins! They are the Lyulkins and you and I are the Kukishevs! That's why we'll toss off a glass in our own, Kukishev, style!"

Kukishev prevailed at last. One day Anninka took from her lover's hands a glass filled with a greenish liquid and tossed it down her throat. Of course it simply took her breath away, she gasped, coughed, wheeled round, and Kukishev was wildly delighted.

"Allow me to inform you, my love, you don't do it properly! You are too quick!" he instructed her when she got

her breath back. "That's how you must hold the glass in your little hand! Then raise it to your sweet lips and, without any hurry: one, two, three . . . here goes!"

Calmly and seriously he poured the vodka down his throat as though down a sink. He did not even wince but, taking a tiny piece of black bread from the plate, dipped it into the salt-cellar and chewed it.

In this way Kukishev realised his second "dream" and began wondering what he could do next to outshine the Lyulkins. And he got an idea right enough.

"Do you know what?" he announced suddenly. "When summer comes let us go with the Lyulkins to my water-mill, take a hamper with food and drinks and bathe in the river by common consent!"

"Never! Certainly not!" Anninka answered indignantly.

"Why not? We'll bathe first, then toss off a glass or two, then have a little rest, and bathe again! That will be just lovely!"

It remains unknown whether this new idea of Kukishev's was realised or not, but in any case their drunken revelry continued for a whole year, during which neither the Municipal nor the Rural councils manifested the slightest uneasiness with regard to Lyulkin and Kukishev. For appearance's sake however, Lyulkin went to Moscow, and said on returning that he had sold some of his forest for timber; and when he was reminded that he had sold it four years ago, while he was living with the Gypsy Domashka, he replied that on that occasion it was the Drygalovsky forest he had sold and this time it was the forest called Dashka's Shame. To make his story more convincing he added that the forest received that name because in times of serfdom a girl named Dashka was "surprised" there and whipped on the spot. As to Kukishev, in order to throw people off the scent, he spread the rumour that he had smuggled in a quantity of foreign lace in a shipment of pencils and made a good profit on the transaction.

Nevertheless, in September of the following year the Chief of Police asked Kukishev to lend him a thousand rubles and Kukishev was foolish enough to refuse. Then the Chief of Police began holding secret conferences with

the Assistant Prosecutor. ("They both swilled champagne at my house every evening!" Kukishev said at the trial afterwards.) On September 17th, the anniversary of Kukishev's "love", when he, together with the others, was again celebrating Lubinka's birthday, a member of the Municipal Council rushed in and told Kukishev that the Council committee had met at the Town Hall and were drawing up a protocol.

"So they've discovered the shortage, have they?" Kukishev exclaimed, rather brazenly, and without further ado followed the man to the Town Hall, and from there to prison.

The next day the Rural Council was started into action too. The members assembled and sent to the treasury for the money-box; they counted the money over and over again, but, reckon it as they would, there proved to be a deficit in their case also. Lyulkin was present at the auditing, pale, gloomy, but . . . noble! When the deficit was established beyond a shadow of doubt and the members were debating in their own minds which forest plot each of them would have to sell in order to cover it, Lyulkin went up to the window, pulled a revolver out of his pocket, and shot himself there and then.

This caused a great deal of talk in the town. People discussed the two men and compared them. They were sorry for Lyulkin and remarked, "At any rate he died like a gentleman," and of Kukishev they said, "A money-grubber, that's all he is." Of Anninka and Lubinka people said straight out that "it was their doing", "it was all because of them", and that "it would not be a bad thing to put them in prison too, as a warning to hussies like them".

The investigating magistrate did not put them into prison but frightened them so thoroughly that they completely lost their heads. There were friends, of course, who advised them to hide their more valuable possessions but they listened without taking it in. In consequence, the Prosecuting Counsel, an enterprising young man, came, accompanied by a sheriff, to the two sisters, and in order to secure the plaintiffs' claims sequestered all he found, leaving the girls only their clothes and such gold and silver things that, to judge from inscriptions engraved on them,

were gifts from delighted audiences. Lubinka managed, however, to secure a packet of notes that had been given her the day before, and hide it in her corset. There proved to be a thousand rubles in that packet—all that the sisters had to live on for an indefinite time to come.

They were not allowed to leave Samovarnov for about four months until the trial took place. Then came the trial which was perfect torture to them, especially to Anninka. Kukishev was disgustingly cynical; there was no need for the details he supplied, but he evidently wanted to show off before the Samovarnov ladies and told absolutely everything. The Public Prosecutor and the counsel for the plaintiffs, both of them young men and also anxious to please the Samovarnov ladies, took advantage of this to give the case a scabrous character. Anninka fainted more than once but the counsel, bent on securing the plaintiffs' claims, took no notice of it and went on asking question after question. At last the preliminary investigation was over, and the case for the plaintiffs and the defendant was stated by their respective counsels. Late at night the jury returned a verdict of "guilty" against Kukishev, but with extenuating circumstances, in view of which he was sentenced to exile in Western Siberia.

When the trial was over the sisters were able to leave Samovarnov. It was high time because their thousand rubles were coming to an end. Besides, the manager of the Krechetov theatre, who had provisionally engaged them, demanded that they come to Krechetov at once, threatening to cancel the engagement if they did not. Of the money, jewellery, and securities sequestered at the prosecuting counsel's request, nothing more was heard.

Such were the consequences of being careless of the "treasure". Wretched, worn out, crushed by the general contempt, the sisters lost all self-confidence, all hope of a better future. They grew thin, frightened, careless of their appearance. And, to crown it all, Anninka, having undergone Kukishev's course of training, took to drink.

Things went from bad to worse. No sooner had the sisters arrived at Krechetov than they were shared out—Lubinka was taken by Captain Papkov and Anninka by Zavyenny, a tradesman. But it was nothing like the good old

times. Both Papkov and Zabvenny were coarse and brutal men, by no means liberal with money (as Zabvenny put it, "It depends upon the goods"), and in three or four months' time they cooled off considerably. To make matters worse the sisters had as little success on the stage as in their love affairs. The theatre manager who had engaged them, hoping that the Samovarnov scandal would enhance their popularity, proved to have made a bad mistake. The very first time that the Misses Pogorelskaya were on the stage somebody called from the gallery, "Hey, you jail-birds!"—and this nickname stuck to the sisters, damning their theatrical career once and for all.

Dull, colourless days followed, devoid of any intellectual interest. The audience was cold, the theatre manager bore them a grudge, their patrons would not stand up for them. Zabvenny who, like Kukishev, had had dreams of how he would urge his "lady-love" to take a drop of vodka with him, of how coy she would be about it at first but gradually would give in to him, was quite aggrieved when he found that the lesson had been thoroughly learnt already so that there was nothing left him but the comfort of inviting his friends "to see the hussy swilling vodka". Papkov too was dissatisfied because Lubinka had grown thin and scraggy.

"There used to be some flesh on you, what have you done with it, tell me?" he questioned her.

In consequence he not only gave up all ceremony with her but even beat her when drunk.

By the spring the sisters had neither "regular" patrons nor a "stable position". They still managed to hold on to the theatre, but it was no longer a question of taking the leading parts. Lubinka looked rather the better of the two; Anninka, being more sensitive, broke down altogether; she seemed to have forgotten the past, and not to be aware of the present. Besides, she developed a suspicious cough; some mysterious disease was evidently at work.

The following summer was dreadful. The sisters were gradually reduced to being taken to hotels to visit gentlemen staying in the town, and came to have a definite and moderate market price. There were perpetual rows and fights, but the sisters seemed to have nine lives and des-

perately clung to existence. They reminded one of those miserable little mongrels who, lamed, wounded, and squealing, still struggle back to their favourite spot in spite of kicks and scaldings. The theatre manager found it inconvenient to keep such characters in his company.

Only once during that dismal year a ray of light broke in upon Anninka's existence: the tragedian Miloslavsky sent her a letter from Samovarnov, urgently begging her to accept his hand in marriage. Anninka read the letter and wept. She tossed about all night, quite beside herself, but in the morning she sent him a brief reply: "What for? To drink vodka together?"

After that the darkness grew denser than ever and she was caught once more in the foul, unending whirl.

Lubinka was the first to come to her senses, or, rather, instinctively to feel that she had had enough of life. They had no longer any prospect of work; youth and beauty, and glimmerings of talent—all seemed to have suddenly disappeared. The thought that they had a home at Pogorelka had not once occurred to her. It all seemed so vague and distant that she scarcely remembered it. Pogorelka had had no attraction for them before and now it appealed to them less than ever. Yes, now, when they were almost starving, she least of all wanted to return there. With what face would she appear before the people there? With a face branded with degradation by innumerable drunken breaths? She seemed to feel those vile breaths all over her body, to be ever conscious of them. And the most awful part of it was that both she and Anninka had grown so used to all this vileness that it had imperceptibly become a part of their very life. They were not disgusted by the stinking hotels, by the rowdy inns, by the shameless drunken talk, and if they settled at Pogorelka they would in all probability miss all that. And, besides, at Pogorelka too they would have to live on something. It was many years since they had started knocking about the world but nothing had ever been heard about any income from Pogorelka. Perhaps it was only a myth. Perhaps everyone there was dead—all those witnesses of their far-off and never-to-be-forgotten childhood when Grandmamma Arina Petrovna fed them on sour milk and smelly salt

meat.... Oh, what a childhood it was! What a life it was ... all life in general! All life ... all, all!

It was clear that they ought to die. Once this thought lights upon one's conscience there is no getting rid of it. Both sisters often woke up from the drunken nightmare in which they lived; with Anninka these awakenings were accompanied by hysterical sobbing and tears and passed off more quickly; Lubinka was colder by nature, and so she did not weep or curse but merely remembered doggedly that she was "vile". Besides, Lubinka was sensible and argued it out quite clearly that there was simply no point in living. There was nothing to look forward to except shame, poverty, and the streets. Shame was a matter of habit and one could endure that, but poverty—never! Better put an end to it all.

"We must die," she said one day to Anninka in the same coldly reasonable tone in which two years ago she had asked her for whom she was guarding her treasure.

"Why?" Anninka asked in fear.

"I tell you seriously: we must die!" Lubinka repeated. "Come to your senses, try to understand!"

"Well ... let's die then!" Anninka agreed, though probably she scarcely grasped the grim significance of that decision.

That very day Lubinka broke off the heads of some sulphur matches and prepared two glassfuls of the solution. She drank one and gave the other to her sister. But Anninka instantly lost courage and refused to drink.

"Drink ... you vile creature!" Lubinka shouted at her. "Sister, darling, dearest, drink!"

Almost mad with fear, Anninka screamed and darted about the room, and at the same time instinctively clutched at her throat as though trying to strangle herself.

"Drink, drink ... you vile thing!"

The artistic career of the Misses Pogorelskaya was over. That same evening Lubinka's body was carted out into the fields and buried by the roadside. Anninka remained alive.

Once at Golovlyovo, Anninka soon introduced a hopelessly Bohemian atmosphere into Judas's old nest. She got

up late, feeling sluggish, and without dressing or doing her hair slouched about the rooms till dinner-time, coughing so dreadfully that Porphiry Vladimirich in his study started in alarm each time he heard her. Her room was always untidy; her bed remained unmade and various articles of clothing lay scattered about the chairs and on the floor. At first she used to see her uncle only at dinner and at evening tea. The lord of Golovlyovo came out of his study dressed all in black, spoke little, but ate as wearisomely slowly as before. He was evidently taking stock of Anninka, as she guessed from his slanting glances at her.

Soon after dinner came the early dusk of a December afternoon, and Anninka began her desolate pacing up and down the long enfilade of the reception-rooms. She liked to watch the last glimmer of a grey winter day dying out, the twilight gathering, shadows filling the rooms, and then the whole house plunging suddenly into impenetrable darkness. She felt better in that darkness and hardly ever lighted the candles. Only one cheap little palm candle spluttered at the end of the large drawing-room, making a small circle of light with its flame. For a time the usual after-dinner sounds were heard in the house: the clatter of crockery and the noise of drawers being opened and shut; then came the sound of retreating steps, and a dead stillness descended on the house. Porphiry Vladimirich lay down for his after-dinner nap, Yevpraxeya buried herself in the feather bed in her room, Prokhor went to the servants' quarters, and Anninka was left quite alone. She walked up and down, singing in an undertone and trying to tire herself out and, above all, not to think. As she walked towards the drawing-room she gazed at the bright circle made by the candle-flame; as she walked back she tried to distinguish some point in the gathering darkness. But in spite of her efforts memories just streamed through her mind. Here was her dressing-room with cheap wallpaper on the wooden partition walls, the inevitable tall mirror and no less inevitable bouquet from Lieutenant Papkov; here was the stage with the smoky, begrimed scenery, slimy with the damp, here was she herself, playing antics on the stage—playing antics, that was just it,

though she had imagined she was acting; here was the house that from the stage seemed so smart, almost brilliant, but was really poor and dark, with odd chairs and boxes upholstered in worn magenta velveteen. And finally—officers, officers, no end of officers. Then the hotel with a smelly corridor dimly lighted by a smoking oil-lamp, her room into which she ran hastily when the performance was over to dress for further merry-making—a room with a bed that had not been made all day, with a washing-stand full of dirty water, a crumpled sheet on the floor, and a pair of drawers forgotten on the back of a chair; then the common-room reeking with kitchen smells, with a table in the middle; supper, cutlets and peas, tobacco smoke, shouting, pushing, drunken revelry. . . . And again officers, officers, no end of officers. . . .

Such were her memories of the time that she had once called the time of her success, her triumphs, her prosperity.

These memories were followed by others. The most vivid thing about them was a stinking inn, with walls frozen through in winter, with rickety floors and a wooden partition, in the cracks of which could be seen the shiny bellies of bugs. Drunken and rowdy nights; gentlemen visitors hastily pulling a three-ruble note out of their thin pocketbooks; dashing tradesmen "putting some life into them actresses" almost with a whip. And in the morning—headache, sickness and misery, hopeless misery. And in the end—Golovlyovo.

Golovlyovo—that was death itself, cruel, greedy death, that is for ever stalking a fresh victim. Two of her uncles had died here; two cousins had received "grave wounds" that resulted in death; and finally Lubinka too. . . . Although it would seem that she had died at Krechetov, "for reasons of her own", but the beginning of the "grave wounds" lay certainly here, at Golovlyovo. All deaths, all poison, all cankers—all came from here. It was here they had been fed on smelly meat; it was here that the orphans had heard for the first time the words: hateful brats, beggars, guttersnipes, greedy maws, and so on; nothing remained unpunished here, nothing escaped the keen eye of the hard and cantankerous old woman; not an extra piece

of food, not a broken penny doll, not a torn rag, not a worn shoe. The slightest disobedience immediately fetched them a slap or a scolding. And so when at last they were free to dispose of themselves and understood that they could escape from all this meanness, they did escape . . . *there!* And no one had stopped them, and indeed no one could have done so, because they felt that nothing could be worse and more hateful than Golovlyovo.

Oh, if she could forget it all and create, if only in a dream, something different, some beautiful world of fancy, that would blot out both the past and the present! But, alas! the crushing experiences she had been through were so overwhelmingly real that they extinguished the slightest glimmer of imagination. In vain she tried to dream of angels with silver wings—Kukishevs, Lyulkins, Zavyennys and Papkovs pitilessly peeped out from behind the angels. . . . Good God, could she really have lost it all? Could her very powers of self-deception have been destroyed by the night revelries, drink and debauchery? But she had to kill her past somehow so that it should not poison her blood and tear at her heart! She wanted something to fall upon it like a dead weight, crushing it, destroying it utterly!

And how strange and cruel it all was! She could not even imagine that there was any future before her, that there were any means of escape, that anything could possibly happen. Nothing could happen. And most unbearable of all was that she was really dead and yet all the outer signs of life were there. She ought to have ended it *then*, together with Lubinka, but somehow she had remained alive. How was it she had not been crushed by the terrible load of shame that fell upon her then? And what a miserable worm she must be to have crawled out from under the mass of stones that had been hurled at her!

These questions made her groan. She ran about the drawing-room, whirling round and round, trying to stifle her turbulent memories. But they all floated up to meet her: the Grand Duchess of Herolstein shaking her hussar cloak, Clairette Angot in a wedding dress cut as low as the waist in front, *la belle Hélène* in a dress that had slits

in front and behind and at the sides. . . . Nothing but shame and nakedness . . . that's how her life had been spent. Could it all have really happened?

At about seven o'clock the house began to wake up again. Preparations for tea were heard, and at last Porphiry Vladimirich's voice reached her. Uncle and niece sat down to the tea-table and exchanged remarks about the day; but since the day had been poor in events, their conversation was as poor. Having finished his tea and performed the rite of kissing his niece good night, Judas crept into his hole for the night and Anninka went to Yevpraxeya's room to play cards.

At eleven o'clock the orgy began. After making certain that Porphiry Vladimirich had settled down for the night, Yevpraxeya produced all sorts of home-made pickles and a decanter of vodka. Anninka recalled various shameless and senseless songs, played the guitar, and, in the intervals between singing and shameless talk, drank glass after glass of vodka. At first she drank calmly in Kukishev's style, "Here goes!" but gradually she grew tragic and began to curse and to moan.

Yevpraxeya looked on and pitied her.

"I look at you, Miss, and I feel so sorry for you, so sorry!"

"Have a drink too—then you won't be sorry!" Anninka replied.

"No, how could I? It's bad enough as it is, what with your uncle, and if I take to drink. . . ."

"Well, then, it's no use talking about it. Better let me sing 'The dear with the moustache' for you."

Again there was the strumming of the guitar and the shrieking of songs. In the small hours of the morning sleep heavy as a stone overpowered Anninka at last. That welcome stone killed her past for a few hours and even kept her disease at bay. But next day she crept out from under it, half-crazed and shattered, and again began to live.

On one of those nights when Anninka was jauntily singing to Yevpraxeya her repertory of bawdy songs, Judas's emaciated figure suddenly appeared in the doorway. He was deadly pale; his lips were trembling; in the

dim flicker of a palm candle his sunken eyes looked like blind hollows; his hands were folded as for prayer. He stood for a few seconds before the dumbfounded women and, turning slowly, walked out of the room.

A kind of doom seems to hang over some families. One notices it particularly among the class of small landowners scattered all over Russia who, having no work to do, no connection with public life, and no political importance, were in their day sheltered by serfdom, but now, with nothing to shelter them, are ending their days in their crumbling country-houses. Everything in those pitiful families' existence—success and failure alike—is blind, unexpected, haphazard.

Sometimes such a family is suddenly caught up as it were by a wave of good luck. Some humble retired lieutenant and his wife vegetating in the wilds of the country suddenly produce a whole bevy of spruce, alert, sturdy children who show a wonderful aptitude for mastering the essentials of life. They are "clever" children, all of them, both boys and girls. The young men do excellently at school and, while still there, form good social connections and find patrons. They know when to behave modestly ("*J'aime cette modestie!*" their superiors say) and when to show independence ("*J'aime cette indépendance!*"); are very sensitive to every wind that blows and never break with any movement without leaving a safe loop-hole through which they can creep back if necessary. Thus they ensure that as long as they live they can either shed their skin at any time without any trouble at all, or, in case of emergency, to change back into it again. In short they are true children of the age who always begin by seeking favours and *almost always* end by perfidy. As to the girls, they, too, further the family fortunes in their special line, that is, they make good marriages and afterwards show so much tact in bestowing their charms that they easily win prominent positions in so-called society.

Thanks to all these chance circumstances, luck simply pours upon the humble family. Its first successful members having won their way through bring up another spruce generation who find life easier because the path has not

merely been marked for them but beaten down, too. That generation will be followed by others until at last the family naturally becomes one of those who regard a life of continual jubilation as their birthright.

Instances of such lucky families have been fairly frequent of late, owing to the growing demand for "fresh" men—a demand due to the gradual degeneration of the "stale ones". In the old days a "new star" also appeared occasionally on the horizon, but that was a rare occurrence. The wall round the blissful domain, the gates of which bear the inscription, "Meat pies eaten here at all times", had in those days hardly any cracks in it, and, besides, a "new" man could only penetrate there if he really were worth his salt. But now there are a great many more cracks, and the business of penetration is not so hard as it used to be, since the newcomer is not expected to have any sterling qualities—"freshness" is enough.

Side by side with those successful families, however, there exist a great number of others upon whom their household gods seem to shower nothing but ill luck. The family is attacked as by vermin by misfortune or vice that steadily gnaws away at it, gradually creeping to its very core and undermining generation after generation. There appears a whole crop of weaklings, drunkards, debauchees, idlers and good-for-nothings generally. As time goes on the family degenerates more and more till at last it produces such miserable weaklings as the younger Golovlyovs I have described in an earlier chapter*—weaklings who cannot resist the impact of life and perish at its first thrust.

It was precisely this kind of doom that hung over the Golovlyov family. Three characteristics had marked its history in the course of several generations: love of idleness, incapacity for any kind of work, and passion for drink. The first two characteristics resulted in moral shallowness, empty talk and idle fancies; the third was as it were the inevitable conclusion of their failure in life. Porphyry Vladimirich had witnessed several victims of this evil fate perish before his eyes, and there was the tradi-

* "Father and Son."—*Auth.*

tion that the same thing had happened to his forefathers. They were all mischievous, empty-headed, and good-for-nothing drunkards, so that the Golovlyov family would certainly have gone down the hill altogether had not Arina Petrovna appeared like a bright meteor amidst this drunken disorder. By her personal efforts and energy that woman built up the family's prosperity to the highest point it was ever to reach, but her labour was wasted because none of her children inherited her qualities and she herself died entangled in the meshes of idleness, empty talk, and petty feelings.

So far, however, Porphiry Vladimirich had held out. Perhaps he consciously avoided drink in view of the results he had witnessed, or maybe he had so far been satisfied with mental drunkenness. It was not for nothing, however, that the neighbours predicted that he too would be the victim of drink. He himself felt at times as though there were some blank in his life, as though the play of empty thought, enjoyable as it was, were not enough. He seemed to feel the lack of something pungent and overpowering that would finally banish all idea of reality and plunge him into emptiness once and for all.

And now the longed-for moment came at last. For some weeks after Anninka's arrival Porphiry Vladimirich shut up in his study, listened to the vague sounds that reached him from the other end of the house; for weeks he tried to guess what it meant and wondered. . . . At last he scented it out.

The following day Anninka expected a reprimand but there was none. As usual Porphiry Vladimirich spent the whole morning in his study, but when he came out to dinner he poured out two glasses of vodka instead of one for himself as usual, and with a sheepish smile silently pointed out one of them to Anninka. It was, so to speak, a silent invitation which Anninka accepted.

"So you say that Lubinka died?" Judas bethought himself half-way through dinner.

"Yes, Uncle."

"Well, God rest her soul! It's a sin to repine, but we ought to remember her. Shall we drink to her memory?"

"Let us, Uncle."

They had another glass each and Judas said nothing more: he had evidently not quite recovered after his long spell of solitude. But after dinner, when Anninka, carrying out the family ritual, went up to kiss and thank him, he patted her on the cheek and said:

"So that's what you're like!"

That same evening at tea, which lasted longer than usual, Porphiry Vladimirich kept glancing at Anninka with an enigmatic smile and said at last:

"Shall I tell them to bring a decanter and something to eat?"

"Well . . . do!"

"That's right; better do it in your uncle's presence than in holes and corners. . . . At any rate your uncle. . . ."

Judas did not finish his sentence. He probably meant to say, "At any rate your uncle would restrain you," but somehow could not bring it off.

After that, every evening a decanter of vodka and something to eat appeared on the dining-room table. The window-shutters were closed, the servants went to bed, and uncle and niece remained alone. At first Judas lagged behind as it were, but after a little practice he quite caught up with Anninka. They sat there, drinking leisurely, and, in the intervals between glasses, talked and recalled the past. At first their conversation was dull and listless, but as their heads grew hotter it became more and more lively and at last inevitably turned into an inconsequent quarrel based upon memories of all the deadly injuries suffered and inflicted at Golovlyovo.

Anninka was always the one to begin those quarrels. With pitiless insistence she dug up the family skeletons, and particularly enjoyed taunting Judas by arguing that he was no less responsible for all the wrongs than his mother. Every word she uttered breathed of such burning hatred that one wondered how a body so feeble and worn out could have preserved so much fire. Her jeering wounded Judas inexpressibly, but as a rule, though angered, he defended himself but weakly; only when Anninka went too far with her bitter taunts, he began to curse her and shout at the top of his voice.

Such scenes took place every day without fail. Though the details of the tragic family history were very soon exhausted, the memory of them haunted their harassed minds so persistently that all their powers of thought were completely chained to them. Every episode, every reminiscence lacerated some old wound and every wound brought back to mind some new series of Golovlyovo wrongs. Anninka found a bitter vindictive pleasure in bringing them to light, in condemning and even exaggerating them. Not a single moral principle to stand by could she find in the whole of the Golovlyovo past and present. Nothing but wretched miserliness and empty talk, stones instead of bread, slaps instead of advice, or—by way of a change—nasty reminders about eating the bread of others, being a hanger-on, a beggar, a greedy mouth to feed. . . . That was all the answer given to a young heart that was yearning for love, warmth, kindness. And the consequences? Through a bitter irony of fate this cruel upbringing resulted not in an austere attitude to life but in a passionate desire to enjoy its poisonous delights. Youth worked the miracle of forgetfulness: it did not let their hearts grow hard, did not allow the hatred to develop in them but filled them with an overwhelming thirst for life. That was why the reckless excitement of stage life held them spellbound for years, thrusting all the Golovlyovo memories far into the background. Only now, when the end was in sight, a gnawing pain gripped her heart; only now Anninka thoroughly understood her past and began to hate it savagely.

Those drunken conversations continued long after midnight, and had not their sting been dulled by drunken incoherence of thought and of speech they might have soon led to something dreadful. Fortunately, however, while drink opened up an inexhaustible source of pain in their aching hearts, it also gave them peace. As night advanced their words grew more and more confused and their hatred less virulent. In the end all sense of pain disappeared and both the past and the present were obliterated by a luminous void. Their tongues hardly obeyed them, their eyes refused to keep open, their movements grew stiff. Uncle

and niece got up heavily from their chairs and staggered to their lairs.

These night orgies could not of course remain a secret to the household. Their nature was so obvious that no one thought it strange when some member of the household said it smelled of crime. The Golovlyovo house grew stiller than ever; even in the mornings there was no sign of life in it. Uncle and niece woke up late and then till dinner-time Anninka's heart-rending cough, accompanied by continual cursing, resounded through the rooms. Judas listened in fear to the terrible sounds, feeling that he, too, was heading for a catastrophe that would make an end of him.

The dead and injured seemed to creep out of every corner of that cursed house. Whichever way he looked, in whatever direction he turned, grey ghosts were stirring everywhere. There was his father Vladimir Mikhailich in a white nightcap, jeering at everyone and quoting Barkov; there was his brother, Styopka the blockhead, and beside him his other brother, the dull and quiet Pavel; there was Lubinka and there were the last scions of the Golovlyovo house, Volodenka and Petenka. All of them drunken, lecherous, tortured and bleeding. . . . And a living ghost was hovering above all those shadows—he himself, Porphiry Vladimirovich Golovlyov, the last representative of the derelict family.

Constant reminders of old wrongs were bound to produce an effect at last. The past had been laid bare so completely that the least touch upon it hurt. The natural consequence of this was something like fear or an awakening of conscience—the second rather than the first. Surprisingly enough it appeared that conscience had not been altogether non-existent, but merely pushed far back and as it were forgotten—losing in consequence the acute sensitiveness that always reminds one of its existence.

Such awakenings of a neglected conscience are extremely painful. When a man's moral sense has not been trained it does not reconcile him to himself, does not reveal to him the possibility of a new life but merely tortures him endlessly and vainly, giving him no hope for the future. A man feels as though he were in a stone well, pitilessly con-

demned to suffer the agonies of remorse without any chance of ever returning to life. And the only means of stilling this hopeless gnawing pain is to take advantage of a moment of gloomy resolve and smash his head against the walls of stone.

In the course of his long and empty life it had never occurred to Judas that living souls were being stifled all round him. He thought he lived soberly and piously, without hurry or scurry, and never supposed that it was just this that blighted other people's lives and, still less, that he was the one responsible for their coming to grief.

And suddenly the awful truth dawned upon his conscience—dawned futilely and too late, for there was no revoking or remedying the past. Here he was—old, solitary, with one foot in the grave, and there was not a single creature in the whole world who would go near him and pity him. Why was he alone? Why did he see hatred, to say nothing of indifference, all around him? Why had everything that had ever come in touch with him perished? Here at this very Golovlyovo there had once been quite a human nest—how was it that not a feather was left of it? The only fledgeling that had survived was his niece, but she had come back merely to mock him, to hound him to death. Even Yevpraxeya, simple as she was, hated him. She lived at Golovlyovo because he sent a monthly supply of food to her father, the sexton, but she certainly lived there hating him. He, the Judas, had done her a grievous wrong—he had put out the light of her life, taking away her son and casting him out into some nameless well. What did all his life come to? Why had he lied, babbled, tyrannised and hoarded? Even from the material point of view, from the point of view of “legacy”—who would profit by the result of it all? Who?

I repeat, his conscience awakened at last but to no purpose. Judas groaned and, consumed with anger and restlessness, with feverish impatience waited for the evening, not only to get drunk like a beast but to drown his conscience in the vodka. He hated “the strumpet” who probed his wounds with such cool impudence but he was irresistibly drawn to her as though something still remained unsaid between them and there were more and more

wounds which had to be probed. Every evening he made Anninka repeat the story of Lubinka's death and every evening the idea of self-destruction gained greater hold on him. At first it flashed through his mind quite by chance, but as the wrongs inflicted in the past grew clearer it began to seep in deeper and at last became the only point of light in the blackness of the future.

In addition, his health took a sharp turn for the worse. He had an ominous cough and suffered from horrible attacks of asthma, which are enough to make one's life a perfect agony apart from any moral tortures. All the outward symptoms of the typical Golovlyov poisoning were present and the deathbed groans of his brother Pavel, gasping for breath in the upper rooms of the Dubrovino house, were already echoing in his ears. And yet his flat, sunken chest, that seemed ready to split any moment, proved extraordinarily strong. Every day it went through more and more physical agony and yet it did not give in. It was as though his body were avenging the old wrongs by offering this unexpected resistance. "Surely this must be the end!" Judas said hopefully each time the attack came on; but the end did not come. Evidently violence was needed to hurry it.

In short, from whatever angle he looked at it, all his accounts with life were settled. There was nothing to live for and it was torture to go on; what he needed most was death, but the trouble was that death would not come. There is something mean and perfidious in this wanton delay, when one's whole being longs for death, but death merely taunts one and lures one on. . . .

It was the end of March, and Holy Week was nearly over. Slack as Porphiry Vladimirich had grown of late, he could not help feeling the holiness of those days which he had been taught to revere from a child. His thoughts unconsciously turned to solemn matters; his heart longed for nothing but perfect peace. Under the influence of this mood the evenings were now spent in silence and melancholy abstinence.

Judas and Anninka were alone in the dining-room. It was not yet an hour since the Vigil service with the read-

ing of "twelve Gospels"* was over and the room still smelt strongly of incense. The clock struck ten; the servants had gone to their quarters and a profound silence reigned in the house. Anninka, with her head in her hands, leant on the table, lost in thought; Porphyry Vladimirovich, sad and silent, sat facing her.

This particular service had always had a deep and shattering effect on Anninka. As a child she wept bitterly when the priest read out, "And when they had plaited a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand," and in a thin little voice, breaking with sobs, seconded the choristers singing, "Glory to Thy long suffering, O Lord! Glory to Thee!" After the service, still shaken with emotion, she ran to the maids' room and there, in the gathering twilight (Arina Petrovna gave the maids no candles when there was no work to do), told the serf girls the story of Our Lord's Passion. The serf girls shed quiet tears, heaved profound sighs. In their bondage they felt that their Lord and Redeemer was near, they believed that He would rise from the dead in very truth. And Anninka, too, felt it and believed. Beyond the dark night of scourging, vile jeers and hustle, all those poor in spirit envisaged the kingdom of light and liberty. Arina Petrovna herself, usually so stern, grew gentle during those days, did not scold, did not reproach Anninka with her keep but stroked her hair and begged her not to be distressed. But Anninka could not calm herself even after going to bed, shuddered and tossed about, jumped up several times in the night, and talked in her sleep.

Then followed the years at school and the years of wandering. The first were without any interest, the second—full of painful sordidness. Even then, however, amid all the hideousness of a life of a travelling actress, Anninka jealously guarded "the holy days", calling up the echoes of the past that helped her to sigh and weep like a child. But now, when all her life down to the smallest

* Twelve selections from the Gospels, beginning with St. John XIII, and ending with Matt. XXVII.—*Ed.*

detail had been taken stock of, when her past had laid a curse upon itself and the future held neither repentance nor forgiveness, when her heart could no longer be moved and she had no more tears to shed—the effect produced on her by the sorrowful story to which she had just listened was truly oppressive. In her childhood, too, the darkness of night weighed upon her, but beyond the darkness there was a hope of dawn. And now there was nothing to hope for, nothing to expect: nothing but eternal and unchanging night. Anninka did not sigh or distress herself or even think of anything; a numbness possessed her.

Porphiry Vladimirich from early youth had also held “the holy days” in reverence, but like a true idolater, he was merely concerned with the ritual involved. Every year on the eve of Good Friday he invited the priest, listened to the Gospel story, sighed, raised his arms, bowed down to the ground, marked on his candle the number of Gospels read, but for all that never understood anything. And only now, when Anninka had roused in him a sense of his deadly wrongs, he understood for the first time that the Gospel story told of an unheard-of, murderous injustice that had been done to Truth. . . .

Of course it would be an exaggeration to say that this discovery made him draw any practical comparisons, but there is no doubt that a confusion akin to despair possessed his mind. That confusion was all the more painful because of the stupor in which he had lived and which brought it upon him. There was something dreadful in that past, but what it was he could not remember clearly. And yet he could not forget it either. Something huge that had so far stood motionless, covered with an impenetrable veil, suddenly seemed to have moved towards him, threatening to crush him any moment. If it really crushed him, that would be the best solution; but he was not easily killed—he might crawl out from under it after all. No, there was no certainty that the natural course of events would bring a solution with it; he must discover it himself and thus put an end to this unbearable confusion. There *was* a solution, he knew there was. He had been considering it for the last month and now, he thought, he would not shrink from it. “We shall be going to Commu-

nion on Saturday," flashed suddenly through his mind. "I must go to Mamma's grave to ask her forgiveness."

"Shall we?" he asked Anninka, having told her of his plan.

"Perhaps . . . let's drive there."

"No, not drive, but..." Porphyry Vladimirich began and broke off suddenly, as though grasping that Anninka might be in the way.

"I have wronged Mamma . . . it was I who brought her to her death . . . I!" wandered through his mind, and his longing "to ask her forgiveness" grew stronger and stronger every minute—not to do it in the ordinary, traditional way either but to fall with a shriek on her grave, and lie prostrate with mortal anguish.

"So you say Lubinka died by her own hand?" he asked suddenly, as though to give himself courage.

At first Anninka did not seem to have heard her uncle's question, but it had evidently reached her because in another two or three minutes she too felt an irresistible desire to return to that death and torture herself with the memories of it.

"So that's how she said it: 'Drink . . . you vile thing?'" he asked when she had repeated her story.

"Yes . . . she did."

"And you remained alive? You didn't drink?"

"No, I am living, you see."

He got up and walked up and down the room in obvious agitation. At last he came up to Anninka and stroked her hair.

"You poor, poor child!" he said quietly.

Something unexpected happened to her at that touch. At first she was amazed, but then her face began to work and suddenly a storm of terrible, hysterical sobs broke from her breast.

"Uncle, are you good? Tell me!" she almost screamed. In a breaking voice, with sobs and tears, she kept repeating the question to which he had given such an absurd answer on the day when she returned from her wanderings to settle at Golovlyovo.

"Are you good? Tell me, answer me, you are good, aren't you?"

"Have you heard what the priest read tonight?" he said when she had quieted down at last. "Ah, what suffering that was! It's only by suffering like Him that one can. . . . And He forgave. He forgave all and for ever!"

In distress and misery he began striding up and down the room again, not noticing that beads of perspiration stood out on his face.

"He forgave them all!" he said, speaking aloud to himself. "Not merely those who at that time gave Him vinegar and gall to drink but also those who afterwards, now and for ever and ever, will go on putting vinegar mingled with gall to His lips. . . . It's terrible! Ah, it's terrible!"

And stopping suddenly in front of her he asked her: "And you . . . have you forgiven?"

Instead of an answer she rushed to him and flung her arms round his neck.

"I need forgiveness," he went on, "for everyone . . . for yourself . . . and for those who are no more. . . . What is it? What has happened?" he cried almost distractedly, staring round him. "Where are . . . *they all*?"

They retired to their rooms feeling utterly worn out and shattered. But Porphiry Vladimirich could not sleep. He turned from side to side in his bed trying to think what it was he had to do. And suddenly the words that had casually flitted through his mind a couple of hours before stood out quite clearly in his memory: "I must go to Mamma's grave and ask her forgiveness." At this reminder a terrible, restless anxiety possessed him.

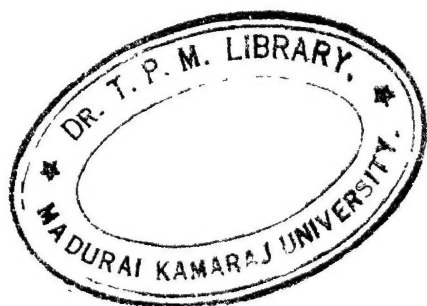
At last he could stand it no longer. He got out of bed and put on his dressing-gown. It was still dark out of doors and not the faintest rustle could be heard anywhere. Porphiry Vladimirich walked up and down the room for some time, stopping to gaze at the icon of the Redeemer in a crown of thorns lighted by a sanctuary lamp. At last he made up his mind. It is hard to say to what extent he was conscious of his own decision, but a few minutes later he stealthily walked to the hall and undid the front-door latch.

A wind was howling and a March snow-storm blinded the eyes with whirling masses of sleet. But Porphiry Vla-

dimirich walked along the road, stepping in the puddles, noticing neither the wind nor the snow and only instinctively wrapping his dressing-gown closer about him.

Early next morning a messenger on horseback galloped up from the village nearest to the churchyard where Arina Petrovna was buried and said that the Golovlyovo master's frozen corpse had been found within a few steps off the road. They rushed to Anninka, but she lay in bed unconscious, with all the symptoms of a brain fever. Then another messenger was dispatched to Goryushkino, to Nadya Galkina (daughter of Auntie Varvara Mikhailovna), who ever since the autumn had kept close watch on all that was going on at Golovlyovo.

1880



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